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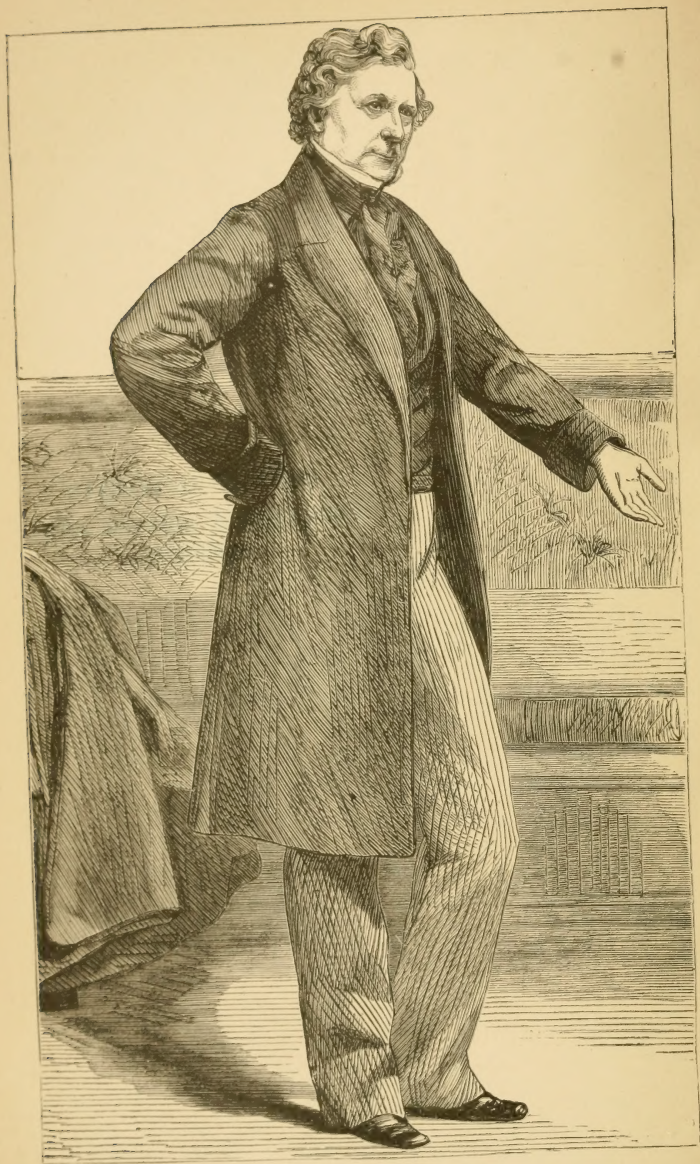








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THOMAS MILNER GIBSON.



# GREAT MOVEMENTS

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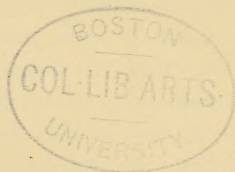
## THOSE WHO ACHIEVED THEM

BY

HENRY J. NICOLL

AUTHOR OF "GREAT ORATORS" "LIFE OF CARLYLE" ETC.

*WITH THIRTEEN PORTRAITS*



NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE

1882

reformers

Inventors

Title

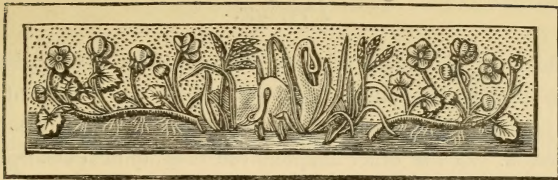
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## PREFACE.

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It is curious to reflect how many of those improvements which have altered the face of society and added greatly to its comfort have had their origin or been carried into practical execution within the last half century. Fifty years ago our railway system was in its infancy; the electric telegraph was known only to a few scientific men; cheap books, periodicals, and newspapers were alike beyond the reach of the humbler classes, for literature and the Press were hampered by various severe restrictions; the food supply of the nation was heavily taxed; and penny postage had not yet been heard of. To relate briefly and in a popular way how and by whom these and some other great reforms were brought about, is the object of the present volume. Narratives of purely political reforms have been excluded, as it was considered desirable that the work should be free from any party bias.

In the first four chapters, which are mainly biographical, are sketched the lives of four men who originated important movements which have continued in active operation down to our own time. Howard, in addition to the work he actually accomplished as a prison reformer, deserves remembrance as having paved the way for those philanthropic labors in which, since his time, so many brave souls have been engaged; the agitation of Wilberforce against the slave-trade finally led to the abolition of slavery by every civilized country; Romilly was one of the first, and certainly the greatest, of a series of large-hearted legislators

by whom our Criminal Code was cleared of its most barbarous enactments; and Brougham was one of the most brilliant and most enthusiastic advocates for national education and popular instruction. In the other chapters the biographical element has been more sparingly introduced, and has been almost entirely excluded in those cases where the history of the movement itself appeared more interesting and more important than the lives of the persons connected with it.

Some may be inclined to complain of the somewhat disproportionate length of the chapter on the repeal of the fiscal restrictions on literature and the Press, but I believe its length is justified by the fact that it furnishes what is, so far as I am aware, the fullest and most accurate account yet published of a most important movement which has been strangely neglected by historians.

I take this opportunity of acknowledging, with thanks, my indebtedness to those gentlemen who, with special knowledge of particular subjects, have supplied me with information, and assisted me in revising the proof-sheets.

For the chapter on the repeal of the fiscal restrictions on the Press, Mr. C. D. Collet and Mr. T. Routledge (paper-maker) afforded several useful hints; and I desire to express my gratitude to Mr. John Francis, who in the kindest manner placed his large and excellent collection of papers on this subject at my disposal, besides assisting me with much valued information and advice.

HENRY J. NICOLL.







## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PRISON REFORM . . . . .	11
<i>John Howard.</i>	
THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE-TRADE . . . . .	48
<i>William Wilberforce.</i>	
THE AMELIORATION OF THE CRIMINAL CODE . . . . .	86
<i>Sir Samuel Romilly.</i>	
POPULAR EDUCATION . . . . .	119
<i>Lord Brougham.</i>	
CHEAP LITERATURE . . . . .	171
<i>Constable, Chambers, Knight, and Cassell.</i>	
PENNY POSTAGE . . . . .	209
<i>Sir Rowland Hill.</i>	
THE REPEAL OF THE CORN-LAWS . . . . .	244
<i>Richard Cobden, John Bright, and C. P. Villiers.</i>	
THE REPEAL OF THE FISCAL RESTRICTIONS UPON LITERATURE AND THE PRESS . . . . .	291
<i>Thomas Milner Gibson and Others.</i>	
THE INTRODUCTION OF GAS . . . . .	366
<i>Murdoch, Winsor, Clegg, and Others.</i>	
THE STEAM-ENGINE, AND ITS APPLICATION TO LOCOMOTION BY LAND AND WATER . . . . .	390
<i>Watt, Stephenson, Fulton, and Bell.</i>	
THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH . . . . .	441
<i>Cooke, Wheatstone, and Others.</i>	
INDEX . . . . .	449





## LIST OF PORTRAITS.

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	PAGE
THOMAS MILNER GIBSON . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
JOHN HOWARD . . . . .	13
WILLIAM WILBERFORCE . . . . .	49
SIR SAMUEL ROMILLY . . . . .	87
HENRY LORD BROUGHAM . . . . .	121
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE . . . . .	173
SIR ROWLAND HILL . . . . .	211
RICHARD COBDEN . . . . .	245
JOHN BRIGHT . . . . .	256
WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE . . . . .	302
GEORGE STEPHENSON . . . . .	391
ROBERT FULTON . . . . .	436
SAMUEL F. B. MORSE. . . . .	453









## PRISON REFORM.

*JOHN HOWARD.*

"I CANNOT name this gentleman without remarking that his labors and writings have done much to open the eyes and hearts of all mankind. He has visited all Europe—not to survey the sumptuousness of palaces or the stateliness of temples; not to make accurate measurements of the remains of ancient grandeur, nor to form a scale of the curiosities of modern art; nor to collect medals or collate manuscripts; but to dive into the depth of dungeons, to plunge into the infection of hospitals, to survey the mansions of sorrow and pain: to take the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt; to remember the forgotten, to attend to the neglected, to visit the forsaken, and compare and collate the distresses of all men in all countries. His plan is original; it is as full of genius as of humanity. It was a voyage of discovery, a circumnavigation of charity. Already the benefit of his labor is more or less felt in every country. I hope he will anticipate his final reward by seeing all its effects fully realized in his own."

In these noble words, glowing with the fire of genius, Edmund Burke addressed the electors of Bristol in 1780. All are familiar with the passage, and all know that it refers to John Howard—Howard the Philanthropist, as he is called—a name which has sufficed to point many a charitable appeal, and to round many an eloquent period. But what manner of man Howard was, and what was the nature of the work in which he engaged; what difficulties he had to overcome, and how

he succeeded in overcoming them ; how it is that his name has become a sort of synonyme for philanthropy—these things, we fear, are known to but few. To the great majority of people Howard is a name, and nothing besides. To make the actual flesh-and-blood man appear before the reader, and to give some insight into the work he accomplished, is the object of the following paragraphs.

Neither the exact place nor the exact date of Howard's birth is known. The monument to him in St. Paul's Cathedral—which, we have read, from the circumstance of the key held in the hand of the statue, has been sometimes taken by foreigners for the representation of the Apostle St. Peter—has inscribed on the pedestal that Howard “was born in Hackney, in the county of Middlesex, September 2, 1726.” The matter is of no great consequence, and this account may be accepted as sufficiently accurate for all practical purposes. Howard's father, who was a Calvinist and a Dissenter, had acquired a considerable fortune in business as an upholsterer and carpet warehouseman in Smithfield. He is said to have been a man of rather penurious habits—a circumstance which has excited the surely unnecessary wonder of some of Howard's biographers, who think it extraordinary that the father of a man so benevolent should have been rather miserly. The circumstance of father and son differing in the bent of their disposition is not so uncommon as to be a matter of surprise. Howard's mother died while he was still an infant, and her loss was a matter of lasting regret to him. Both his parents appear to have been worthy, industrious, and somewhat dull people, of strict Puritanical principles, who lived decent and respectable if somewhat dark and colorless lives.

Howard, who was a rather sickly boy, received a fair, and nothing more than a fair, education. The first school he attended was one taught by a certain Rev. John Worsley, at which he remained seven years. “I left that school,” he is recorded to have said to Dr. Aikin, “not fully taught in any one thing.” Probably no boy ever yet did leave school fully



JOHN HOWARD.

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taught in any one thing ; and too much stress must not be laid upon this remark of Howard, who at no time was distinguished by intellectual quickness and brilliancy, and who, while at school, appears to have been known as a remarkably dull boy. His second school-master was Mr. John Eames, who kept an academy in London—a man of superior abilities, and honored by the friendship of Sir Isaac Newton, through whose influence he became a Fellow of the Royal Society. While at this seminary Howard formed a close and intimate friendship with the boy who afterward became celebrated as Dr. Richard Price, a name familiar to all students of Burke's "*Reflections on the French Revolution*," his mention in which may, perhaps, be said, without much injustice, to constitute his principal title to remembrance nowadays. The alliance which sprung up between him and Howard well illustrates a truth examples of which are of every-day occurrence—that friendships are more frequently formed between those possessing great diversity in intellectual character than between those possessing great similarity. Compared with Howard's, Price's intellect was of diamond acuteness and brilliance. Howard was one of the dullest boys in the school ; Price held the foremost place in all his classes. But the solid worth, the veracity, the simple, honest, undeviating adherence to duty which even at that early period prominently distinguished Howard's character, irresistibly attracted the clever and versatile Price, who afterward became very useful to Howard in the preparation of his reports on prisons.

Howard left school with an education which in our day would be considered inadequate for a lad of his position, but which was very respectable, as things went, in the middle of last century. Though he never acquired the art of writing his own language with ease and correctness, and though his slips in grammar and in spelling are rather conspicuous in his private correspondence, he had acquired sufficient knowledge to be a good business man ; and it was for business that his father, emulous that his son should tread in his own footsteps,

designed him. He was apprenticed to a wholesale grocer in London; a premium of £700 was paid with him, separate apartments were allowed him, and he was furnished with a pair of saddle-horses. These facts show that the elder Howard must have held no contemptible position in the commercial world. Howard himself seems to have had many of the qualities necessary for success in business—unflinching honesty, patience, perseverance, and a dogged tenacity of purpose, that never relaxed its efforts in the pursuit of an end until that end was attained. However, he never took kindly to the drudgery of office-work, and on the death of his father, in 1742, he made arrangements to terminate his apprenticeship. By his father's will he was left heir to a considerable amount of property, and £7000 in money. Into his inheritance, however, he was not to enter till his twenty-fourth year, the property in the intervening period being under the management of certain trustees. But such was the confidence in his discretion and honor with which Howard even at this early age had inspired all with whom he came into contact, that the trustees saw fit to intrust him immediately with a considerable part of the management of the estate.

Freed from the trammels of business and possessed of an ample fortune, Howard gave the first indication of that fondness for travel which clung to him throughout life, by undertaking a tour on the Continent soon after his father's death. According to one of his biographers it was at this time that he brought with him from Italy those paintings by which he afterward embellished his favorite seat at Cardington.

On his return from the Continent, Howard went into lodgings at Stoke Newington, where he remained for several years. His health had always been delicate, and at this period appears to have been especially so, requiring very careful regimen. In spite of all his precautions, he was attacked with a severe illness while lodging in the house of Mrs. Loidore, a widow lady of small independent property. She appears to have been of a rather humble station in life, and was a perpetual invalid. She

nursed him with so much care and kindness that, on his recovery, to testify his gratitude, he offered her marriage. "Against this unexpected proposal," we read in Mr. Baldwin Brown's "Life of Howard," "the lady made many remonstrances, principally upon the ground of the great disparity in their ages; but Mr. Howard being firm in his purpose, the union took place in the year 1752, he being then in about the twenty-fifth year of his age, and his bride in her fifty-second. Upon this occasion he behaved with a liberality which seems to have been inherent in his nature, by settling the whole of his wife's little independence upon her sister. The marriage, thus singularly contracted, was productive of mutual satisfaction to the parties who entered it. Mrs. Howard was a woman of excellent character, amiable in her disposition, sincere in her piety, endowed with a good mental capacity, and forward in exercising its powers in every good word and work." It is amusing to read the high-flown comments with which some of Howard's biographers treat this episode in his life. We prefer passing it quietly over with the straightforward narrative given in the foregoing quotation.

Howard and his wife lived very happily together for two or three years; and he appears to have experienced sincere affliction on her death, which happened soon after the above period. Now, unbound by any tie, he again betook himself to travel. The great earthquake at Lisbon, in 1755, which crushed tens of thousands at a breath, had created a profound sensation throughout Europe. "So complicated an event," Goethe writes, "arrested the attention of the world; and as additional and more detailed accounts of the explosion came to hand from every quarter, the minds already aroused by the misfortunes of strangers began to be more and more anxious about themselves. The demon of terror had never so speedily and so powerfully stirred the earth." The great sensation produced by the catastrophe naturally induced Howard to turn his steps toward Portugal; and he set sail for Lisbon in a vessel called the *Hanover*. It seems absurd to say that in so doing Howard was moved by

a philanthropic desire to relieve the sufferers. Curiosity, in all probability, was the principal motive that prompted him.

With whatever motive he set out, he was not fated to reach his destination. The ship in which he sailed was captured by a French privateer, and he, along with the rest of the passengers and crew, was taken prisoner. After having been kept forty hours without food or water, they were carried into Brest, and there retained prisoners of war. On their arrival they were cast into a filthy dungeon, and kept a considerable time without nourishment. At length a joint of mutton was thrown into the midst of them, which, for want of the accommodation of even a solitary knife, they were obliged to tear in pieces and gnaw like dogs. After having experienced such or similar treatment for a week, Howard was removed to Morlaix, and afterward to Carpaix, where he remained for two months upon parole, owing, we are told, to the humanity of his jailer, and the confidence he reposed in his prisoner's honor. It is a significant circumstance that "a similar conviction of his integrity is said to have induced the person in whose house he went to board and lodge amply to supply him, though an utter stranger, with both clothes and money, and to maintain him upon the faith of being paid when he got home or could obtain remittances." To this confinement of Howard is probably to be attributed the influence that led him to devote his life to the condition of prisoners. "Perhaps," he says, in the preface to his first report, "what I suffered on this occasion increased my sympathy with the unhappy people whose case is the subject of this book."

Released upon parole, Howard returned to England, where he effected the necessary exchange. In an application made to the Commissioners of Sick and Wounded Seamen he strongly represented the unhappy state of his fellow-prisoners. His appeal had an instant effect, and thanks were returned him by the Commissioners. After this matter had been settled Howard retired to Cardington, where he occupied himself in plans to ameliorate the condition of his tenantry, and in those pur-



suits by engaging in which so many worthy country gentlemen try to persuade themselves that they are busy. He dabbled a little in medicine and science, and attended with the utmost assiduity to the variations of the thermometer. Some observations on the state of the weather were communicated by him to the Royal Society, of which body he at this time became a member, "in conformity," Dr. Aikin tells us, "to the laudable practice of that Society, of attaching gentlemen of fortune and leisure to the interests of knowledge, by incorporating them into that body."

In 1758 Howard married a second time. On this occasion the object of his choice was in every way suitable, both in age and in character. His wife was Henrietta Leeds, second daughter of Edward Leeds, of Croxton, in Cambridgeshire. A droll anecdote is told of a circumstance connected with the wedding. "Howard," writes one of his biographers, "had a high idea (some of his friends may think too high) of the authority of the head of a family. And he thought it right, because most convenient, to maintain it, for the sake of avoiding the unhappy consequences of domestic disputes. On this principle I have more than once heard him pleasantly relate the agreement he made with the last Mrs. Howard, previous to their marriage, that, to prevent all altercation about these little matters which he had observed to be the chief grounds of uneasiness in families, he should always decide. To this the amiable lady readily consented, and ever adhered. Nor did she ever regret the agreement, which she found to be attended with the happiest effects. Such was the opinion she entertained, both of his wisdom and his goodness, that she perfectly acquiesced in all that he did, and no lady ever appeared happier in the conjugal bonds." This story brings well out what, as we shall afterward see, was one of the most objectionable features of Howard's character—his claim to a sort of patriarchal authority. Such a stipulation as that he made with his wife would, it has been well remarked, probably be a mere nullity; "with, or without it, the stronger will would predominate; but if we

are to suppose it a really binding objection, forming the basis of the conjugal union, it presents to us anything but an attractive aspect."

The period of his residence in Cardington was unquestionably the happiest in Howard's life. He himself said that the years of his stay there were the only years of true enjoyment he had known in life. Both he and his wife devoted all their energies to the laudable task of making the village of Cardington, which had hitherto been the abode of poverty and wretchedness, a model both in its appearance and in its inhabitants. "With characteristic energy and earnestness Howard set himself—within the sphere of his own competence and influence—to improve the state of the poor people, both in a worldly and in a spiritual sense. Beginning with his own estate, he saw that the huts in which his tenantry, like all others of their class, were huddled together were dirty, ill-built, ill-drained, imperfectly lighted and watered, and altogether so badly conditioned and unhealthy as to be totally unfit for the residence of human beings. With the true instinct of a reformer he perceived that while the people were thus miserably cabined—compelled to be uncleanly on their domestic hearths—uncomfortable in their homes—any attempt to improve their minds, to induce them to become more sober, industrious, home-loving, must be only so much effort thrown away; and he resolved to begin his work at the true starting-point, by first aiming to improve their *physical* condition—to supply them with the means of comfort, thus attaching them to their firesides, the centres of all pure feeling and sound morals—to foster and develop in them a way to the attainment of such moderate intellectual pleasures as their lot in life did not forbid. But, more than all, it was his desire to establish in their minds the foundation of moral and religious convictions."\* In ruling over his little kingdom Howard carried into effect those patriarchal ideas which constantly influenced him. His tenants

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\* Hepworth Dixon's "Life of Howard," p. 35.

were under his authority, were removable at will, were bound over to sobriety and industry, were required to abstain from such amusements as he deemed of an immoral tendency, and to attend regularly at public worship. No doubt there was a good deal in his arrangements which nowadays would appear to savor a little of tyranny, and we can scarcely hesitate to believe that if his system had been applied to a wider area it would have broken down; but landlords filled with anxiety for the moral and spiritual well-being of their tenantry were few and far between in the eighteenth century, and Howard deserves the highest credit for having seen thus early that owners of property have their duties as well as their privileges.

In March, 1765, Howard's wife bore him a son. A few days afterward she died. She had been a true and loving helpmate to him, and he felt her loss with terrible intensity. The anniversary of her death he spent as a day of fasting and meditation to the end of his life. It is related that when, a good many years afterward, on the eve of a departure to the Continent, Howard was walking with his son in his grounds, examining some plantations which they had recently been making, and arranging a plan for future improvements, coming to a walk which had been planted by his wife, he said, "Jack, in case I should not come back, you will pursue this work or not, as you may think proper; but, remember, this walk was planted by your mother, and if you ever touch a twig of it may my blessing never rest upon you!"

For some time after the death of his wife Howard remained in the melancholy retirement of Cardington; but he soon found that residence in a place every part of which brought up some recollection of his sad bereavement was impossible to him. Accordingly, he made arrangements for the education of his son, and, having broken up his establishment at Cardington, set out for the Continent. Some fragments of a diary which he kept at this time give us much insight into his character. One entry we quote as a specimen of several. Such a passage may seem rather out of place in a book of this nature; but if

the spirit that prompted it be disregarded, no true estimate can be formed of Howard's inner life :

“ *Turin, 1769, November 30.*—My return without seeing the southern part of Italy was on much deliberation, as I feared a misimprovement of a talent spent for mere curiosity, at the loss of many Sabbaths, and as many donations must be suspended for my pleasure, which would have been as I hope contrary to the general conduct of my life, and which, on a retrospective view on a death-bed would cause pain, as unbecoming a disciple of Christ—whose mind should be formed in my soul.—These thoughts, with distance from my dear boy, determine me to check my curiosity and be on the return.—Oh, why should Vanity and Folly, Pictures and Baubles, or even the stupendious (*sic*) mountains, beautiful hills, or rich valleys, which ere long will all be consumed, engross the thoughts of a candidate for an eternal everlasting kingdom—a worm ever to crawl on earth whom God has raised to the hope of Glory which ere long will be revealed to them which are washed and sanctified by faith in the blood of the Divine Redeemer! Look forward, oh! my soul! how low, how mean, how little is everything but what has a view to that glorious world of Light, Life, and Love—the preparation of the heart is of God—Prepare the heart, oh God! of thy unworthy creature, and unto Thee be all the glory through the boundless ages of eternity!

“Sign’d, J. H.”

The above extract, which amply bears out what was said before of Howard's defective knowledge of the English language, is significant in other respects. From it we may gather that a deep religious sentiment, which burnt passionately beneath his cold and stiff exterior, was the mainspring that prompted his labors and sustained him in them. Apart from their religious fervor, Howard's letters and memoranda are not remarkable, containing just such observations as we should expect from an Englishman of his character. Thus, speaking of Geneva, he says: “There are in it some exemplary persons; yet the



principles of one of the vilest of men (Voltaire), with the corruptions of the French, who are within one mile of the city, have greatly debased its ancient purity and splendor." This judgment regarding Voltaire reminds one of what Dr. Johnson said, when Boswell remarked to him, "My dear sir, you don't call Rousseau bad company? Do you really think *him* a bad man?" "Sir," replied Johnson, "if you are talking jestingly of this, I don't talk with you. If you mean to be serious, I think him one of the worst of men; a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. Three or four nations have expelled him, and it is a shame that he is protected in this country." Upon Boswell's going on to ask, "Sir, do you think him as bad a man as Voltaire?" he was met with the stern rejoinder, "Why, sir, it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them."

After visiting Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Rome, and Naples, Howard returned to England, and took up his residence at Cardington. In 1773 he was elected to the office of High Sheriff of Bedford. Howard was a Dissenter, and the Test Act, which excluded all Non-conformists from offices of trust and honor in the state, was then in force. By entering upon the office he made himself subject to severe penalties, if any one should choose to proceed against him; but he thought that to accept the proposed honor was his duty; and when he saw anything to be his duty he undertook it, at whatever risk. Well was it for his country that at this time he listened to the voice of duty rather than of prudence! The discharge of his new office carried him into the interior of the prison, and by the scenes he saw there he was led to devote his life to Prison Reform. "The distress of prisoners," he writes in the preface to his first report, "came more immediately under my notice when I was Sheriff of the county of Bedford; and the circumstance which excited me to activity in their behalf was by seeing some who by the verdict of juries were declared *not guilty*; some on whom the grand-jury did not find such an appearance of guilt as subjected them to trial; and some whose

prosecutors did not appear against them, after having been confined for months, dragged back to jail and locked up again, till they should pay *sundry fees* to the jailer, the clerk of assize, etc. In order to redress this hardship I applied to the justices of the county for a salary to the jailer in lieu of fees. The Bench was properly affected with the grievance, and willing to grant the relief desired; but they wanted a precedent for charging the county with the expense. I therefore rode into several neighboring counties in search of a precedent; but I soon learned that the same injustice was practised in them; and looking into the prisons, I beheld scenes of calamity which I grew daily more and more anxious to alleviate."

It was to no light or easy task that Howard addressed himself. In Mr. Hepworth Dixon's "Life" there is an interesting chapter describing the state of some prominent prisons in the earlier part of the last century. Let one example suffice in place of many. What was the state of the Marshalsea in the beginning of the present century has been made familiar to all by the genius of Dickens in "Little Dorrit." Here is part of an account of it as it was in 1728: "The common side is enclosed with a strong brick wall; in it are now confined upward of 330 prisoners, most of them in the utmost necessity; they are divided into particular rooms called wards, and the prisoners belonging to each ward are locked up in their respective wards every night, most of which are excessively crowded, thirty, forty, nay, fifty persons having been locked up in some of them, not sixteen feet square; and at the same time that these rooms have been so crowded, to the great endangering the health of the prisoners, the largest room on the common side hath been kept empty, and the room over George's ward was let out to a tailor to work in, and nobody allowed to lie in it, though all the last year there were sometimes forty, and never less than thirty-two persons locked up in St. George's ward every night, which is a room of sixteen by fourteen feet, and about eight feet high; the surface of the room is not sufficient to contain that number when laid down,

so that one-half are laid up in hammocks, while the other lie on the floor under them; the air is so wasted by the number of persons who breathe in that narrow compass, that it is not sufficient to keep them from stifling, several having in the heat of summer perished for want of air." Horrible as this account is, its horrors do not nearly come up to some of the scenes witnessed by Howard in his career of prison exploration.

It was about the close of the year 1773 when he set out. There is no need to enter upon a full account of the state of every prison he visited. At Northampton he found that the jailer, in place of receiving a salary, actually paid £40 a year for his situation, so profitable were the "sundry fees" of the poor prisoners found to be. Nor was this a solitary case. At Norwich the keeper paid the same to the under-sheriff for his situation; and at Exeter £22 a year was paid by the keeper. After reading this one does not wonder to find that when Howard visited Exeter he found two sailors in jail, who for some trifling fault had been fined by a magistrate 1s. each, and were detained because unable to discharge the large fees of the jailer and the clerk of the peace—the first amounting to 14s. 4d., the latter to £1 1s. 4d. Even in places where these shameless extortions do not appear to have been practised the state of the prisons was loathsome in the extreme. The condition of the criminal department of York Castle has been thus described: "Its court-yard was small and without water. The pump being ingeniously placed just outside the palisades, water had consequently to be carried in by the servants of the establishment—a circumstance which sufficiently accounted for the filthiness of the place. Considering the very imperfect means of ventilation then known, the cells were horribly small, being only seven and a half feet long, six and a half wide, and eight and a half high; that is, each cell contained about 414 cubic feet of air, being less than thirty-six hours' consumption for a single individual; in addition to which they were close and dark, having only a hole of about four inches by eight over the door, or half a dozen perforations of an inch

or so in diameter, by which the scanty and poisoned air of the narrow passages, serving to divide the cells, might enter, if it could. Yet in each of these dungeons *three* human beings were commonly locked up for the night, which in winter lasted from fourteen to sixteen hours! There could be no wonder that the destroyer was so busy in this jail—for into these loathsome holes the victims were thrust nightly, with only a damp floor, barely covered by a wretched pittance of straw, for their bed of rest; while a sewer, which ran through one of the passages, rendered them still more offensive. The infirmary for the sick consisted of a single room, so that when there was an inmate of one sex in it, the sick of the other—should there be any, as was frequently the case—had to remain in their noisome dens until death relieved them from their sufferings. A case of this kind came under Howard's immediate notice. At the time of his visit a woman was sick, and of course she occupied the infirmary; a man was afterward seized with the distemper, always raging with more or less violence in the prisons of that period, but he was forced to remain, ill as he was, in his infected cell." At every second prison he visited Howard met with cases of the kind, all of which he carefully examined. His work was not of a kind which could have been accomplished by a kid-gloved philanthropist.

The report of Howard's labors at length reached the House of Commons, which had been lately concerning itself about such things; and Howard was called to give evidence regarding what he had seen. After the clear and satisfactory answers to the questions addressed to him were heard, it was moved, "That John Howard, Esq., be called to the Bar, and that Mr. Speaker do acquaint him that the House are very sensible of the humanity and zeal which have led him to visit the several jails of this kingdom, and to communicate to the House the interesting observations he has made on the subject." Howard was accordingly called to the Bar, and received the thanks of the House. An odd incident occurred during his examination. One of the members, surprised at the



extent of his information, and unable to believe that any one should have gone through so much for purely philanthropic considerations, asked him at whose expense he travelled. We need not be surprised to learn that Howard could hardly reply to this question without expressing some indignant emotion.

Howard had soon the satisfaction of seeing the first practical fruit of his labors by two bills being passed, one to remunerate the jailer by a salary instead of by fees, the other having reference to the ventilation of prisons and the health of prisoners. At his own expense Howard caused these bills to be reprinted in large character, and sent a copy of them to every jailer and warder in the kingdom. Having once found out wherein his life-work was to consist, he devoted his whole energies—mental, moral, and physical—to it. No sooner was his examination before Parliament finished than, after a brief interval of rest, he resumed his investigations into the state of the prisons of England, devoting much attention to the state of the London jails in particular. On the passing of the acts above mentioned, the latter of which became law in June, 1774, he commenced a tour to see if their provisions had been carried out, visiting the principal jails in North Wales and many of those in South Wales, as well as revisiting such of the English prisons as lay in his route. While thus engaged his attention was turned to a new sphere of exertion, of which he thus writes: “Seeing in two or three of the country jails some poor creatures whose aspect was singularly deplorable, and asking the cause of it, I was answered, they were lately brought from the *bridewells*. This started a fresh subject of inquiry. I resolved to inspect the *bridewells*; and for that purpose I travelled again into the counties where I had been, and indeed into all the rest, examining *houses of correction, city and town jails*. I beheld in many of them, as well as in the county jails, a complication of distress; but my attention was particularly fixed by the jail-fever and small-pox which I saw prevailing to the destruction of multitudes, not only of felons in their dungeons



but of debtors also." During the year 1774 Howard completed his survey of English jails.

Toward the close of the same year occurred an important event in Howard's life. To many it appeared desirable that a man with the public interest so much at heart should have a seat in the House of Commons, and he was asked to stand as candidate for Bedford. After a severe struggle on the hustings, it was found that he stood last on the poll. A petition impeaching the return was presented to the House of Commons, which materially diminished the majority of the successful candidates; and in the end it was found that he had lost the seat by only four votes. Howard appears to have felt his defeat not a little; but we cannot think it was at all an unfortunate circumstance. He would never have made a distinguished appearance as a member of Parliament; nay, probably he would at once have sunk into the insignificant position of a silent member; while, occupied by his attendance at the House, he would not have been able to devote so much time to the special work in which he was qualified to engage—better, it is probable, than any man living.

The interval between the election and the hearing of the petition Howard employed in visiting the prisons of Scotland and Ireland, for the purpose of comparing their condition with that of the prisons of England and Wales. The Irish prisons he found in an even worse condition than those of England. With the prisons of Scotland, on the other hand, he was considerably better pleased. There he found that the prisoners when acquitted were *immediately* discharged in open court, that the jailers received no fee from any criminal, and that women were not put in irons. So far as concerned their internal condition, however, the prisons manifested little improvement on those in England. Most of those he saw were old buildings, dirty and offensive, and also generally without water. The Tolbooth in Inverness comes in for particular mention, as the most dirty and offensive prison he had seen in Scotland.

Having now completed his survey of the prisons of England

and Scotland, Howard began to think of preparing his report on them for publication. "I designed," he writes, "to publish the account of our prisons in the spring of 1775, after I returned from Scotland and Ireland. But conjecturing that something useful to my purpose might be collected abroad, I laid my papers aside, and travelled into France, Flanders, Holland, and Germany." Of this tour, full of incident as it was, a slight account must suffice. Perhaps in no part of his life did Howard display nobler qualities than throughout this Continental journey. No danger daunted him; no fear of consequences overawed him; he was contented with no second-hand information; unless he could see the actual state of things with his own eyes he was not satisfied. One of the first things he did on his arrival in France was to endeavor to enter the jealously-guarded Bastile. "I was desirous of examining it myself," he says, "and for that purpose knocked hard at the outer gate, and immediately went forward through the guard to the drawbridge before the entrance to the castle. But while I was contemplating this gloomy mansion an officer came out, much surprised, and I was forced to retreat through the mute guard, and thus regained that freedom which for one locked up within these walls it is next to impossible to obtain." Taking advantage of the *arrêt* of 1717, which directs the jailers in the city of Paris to admit all persons desirous of giving donations of charity, he penetrated into the other prisons, and found, on the whole, much to admire in them as compared with the prisons of England.

In a letter from Brussels to a friend he says: "Since I left England, I have visited several jails in French Flanders, and almost every one in Paris, and indeed with no little resolution did I get admission into those seats of woe, as at this time, both in Paris, Versailles, and in many provinces, there have been the greatest riots and confusion. . . . I came late last night to this city; the day I have employed in visiting the jails, and collecting all the criminals' laws, as I have got those of France. However rigorous they may be, yet their great care and atten-

tion to their prisons is worthy of commendation—all fresh and clean; no jail distemper; no prisoners ironed; the bread allowance far exceeds that of any of our jails—*e. g.*, every prisoner here has two pounds of bread a day, soup, and on Sunday one pound of meat. But I write to my friend for a relaxation of what so much engrosses my thoughts. And, indeed, I force myself to the public dinners and suppers for that purpose, though I show so little respect to a set of men who are so highly esteemed (the French cooks), as I have not tasted fish, flesh, or fowl since I have been on this side the water. . . . I hope to be in Holland in the beginning of next week.” In Holland—in every respect a country very much to Howard’s taste—he found the state of the prisons far superior to any he had seen elsewhere. Having examined the jails in part of Germany, he returned to England in the end of June, 1775.

Immediately on his return home Howard began to arrange his memoranda with a view to publication. But in going over them he found several blanks which he thought required to be filled up. Accordingly, he immediately commenced a second survey of the English prisons. Some things he saw gave him great satisfaction. In the county jail of Nottingham, for example, the provisions of the act for preserving the health of prisoners were painted over the keeper’s door, and were most cheerfully and exemplarily observed. But in many of the jails little improvement was to be seen. In Penzance, in Cornwall, was a prison consisting of but two rooms, in the keeper’s stable-yard, at a distance from the house and entirely out of hearing. The room for men was eleven feet square and six in height; it had only one very small window, no chimney, an earthen floor, and was extremely damp. In this wretched place one miserable creature was found. “The door had not been opened for four weeks,” writes Howard, “when I went in, and then the keeper began shovelling away the dirt. There was only one debtor, who seemed to have been robust, but was grown pale by ten weeks’ close confinement, with little food, which he had from a brother who has a family. He said the dampness of

the prison, with but little straw, had obliged him (he spoke with sorrow) to send for the bed on which some of his children lay. He had a wife and ten children, two of whom died since he came thither, and the rest were almost starving." Cases such as this were encountered by Howard with only too great frequency in his tour.

Leaving England in the beginning of 1776, Howard made an excursion to Switzerland, to visit some of the Swiss jails. Returning home, he completed his survey of the prisons of England and Wales. Now, at length, it seemed to him that he had collected sufficient material for the publication of an exhaustive report. In the beginning of 1777 he took up his residence at Warrington, where, principally that he might have the assistance of his friend Dr. Aikin, who practised as a surgeon in that town, he had resolved that his book should be printed. In Aikin's biography of Howard there is an interesting account of how he set about the preparation of the great work, to collect the materials for which had cost him so much toil and self-sacrifice. "On his return from his tour," he says, "he took all his memorandum-books to an old retired friend of his, who assisted him in methodizing them, and copied out the whole matter in correct language. They were then put into the hands of Dr. Price, from whom they underwent a revision, and received occasionally considerable alterations. What Mr. Howard himself thought of the advantages they derived from his assistance will appear from the following passages in letters to Dr. Price: 'I am ashamed to think how much I have accumulated your labors, yet I glory in that assistance, to which I owe so much credit in the world, and, under Providence, success in my endeavors.' 'It is from your kind aid and assistance, my dear friend, that I derive so much of my character and influence; I exult in declaring it, and shall carry a grateful sense of it to the last hours of my existence.' With his papers thus corrected Mr. Howard came to the press at Warrington; and first he read them all over carefully with me, which perusal was repeated, sheet by sheet, as they were printed.



As new facts and observations were continually suggesting themselves to his mind, he put the matter of them upon paper, as they occurred, and then requested me to clothe them in such expressions as I thought proper. On these occasions, such was his diffidence, that I found it difficult to make him acquiesce in his own language when, as frequently happened, it was unexceptionable. Of this additional matter, some was interwoven in the text, but the greater part was necessarily thrown into notes, which in some of his volumes are numerous."

The interest with which Howard watched the progress of his work through the press was intense and absorbing. To be near the scene of his labors, he took lodgings in a house close to his printer's shop. Though it was a very severe winter, he was always called up at two in the morning, in order that he might, unmolested, employ himself in revising the sheets of his book. At seven he breakfasted; and at eight repaired to the printing-office, where he remained till the workmen went to dinner, at one, when he returned to his lodgings, and, putting some bread and raisins, or other dried fruit, in his pocket, generally took a walk in the outskirts of the town, eating, as he went, his hermit fare, which, with a glass of water on his return, was the only dinner he took. When he had returned to the printing-office (continues his biographer, Mr. Baldwin Brown), he generally remained there until the men left work, and then repaired to Mr. Aikin's house, to go through with him any sheets that might have been composed during the day; or, if there was nothing upon which he wished to consult him, he would either spend an hour with some friend or return to his own lodgings, where he took his tea or coffee, in lieu of supper, and at his usual hour retired to bed.

At length, in 1777, appeared the work for which he had displayed such anxious solicitude. It was a large quarto volume of 520 pages, embellished with four plates, and had as its title, "The State of the Prisons in England and Wales, with Preliminary Observations, and an Account of some Foreign Prisons, by John Howard, F.R.S." In order that its circulation



might be as widely diffused as possible it was sold under cost price ; and that none of those in high authority might excuse their negligence by pleading ignorance, copies were distributed profusely among all who held influential positions. Naturally, the work created a great sensation. "The world," says Dr. Aikin, "was astonished at the mass of valuable materials accumulated by a private, unaided individual, through a course of prodigious labor, and at the constant hazard of life, in consequence of the infectious diseases prevalent in the scenes of his inquiries. The cool good-sense and moderation of his narrative, contrasted with that enthusiastic ardor which must have compelled him to the undertaking, was not less admired ; and he was immediately regarded as one of the extraordinary characters of the age, and as the leader in all plans of meliorating the condition of that wretched part of the community for whom he interested himself."

From the extracts scattered through the previous pages some idea will have been gathered of the contents of Howard's book. Despite its want of literary elegance, it forms very interesting reading, and contains an invaluable amount of information for any one who wishes to form for himself an accurate picture of social life in England in the eighteenth century. Those fond of praising the "good old times" will find something to make them pause by glancing at its pages. In a simple, business-like manner, totally devoid of "gush" or sentiment, Howard describes what he saw, giving the plain facts of the case, with very little comment. In the introductory section he gives what he calls a "General View of Distress in Prisons," containing a summary of the general state of the jails as to food, water, air, bedding, morals, etc. From this we extract the section "Air," which will serve as a specimen :

"And as to air, my reader will judge of the malignity of that breathed in prisons when I assure him that my clothes were, in my first journeys, so offensive that in a postchaise I could not bear the windows drawn up, and was therefore obliged commonly to travel on horseback. The leaves of my

memorandum-book were often so tainted that I could not use it till after spreading it an hour or two before the fire; and even my antidote—a phial of vinegar—has, after using it in a few prisons, become intolerably disagreeable. I did not wonder that in those journeys many jailers made excuse and did not go with me to the felons' wards. From hence any one may judge of the probability there is against the health and life of prisoners crowded in close rooms, cells, and subterranean dungeons for fourteen or fifteen hours out of the four-and-twenty. In some of these caverns the floor is very damp; in others there is an inch or two of water; and the straw, or bedding, is laid on such floors—seldom on barrack-bedsteads. Where prisoners are not kept in underground cells, they are often confined to their rooms, because there is no court belonging to the prison—which is the case in many city and town jails; or because the walls round the yard are ruinous, or too low for safety; or because the jailer has the ground for his own use. Some jails have no sewers or vaults; and in those that have, if they be not properly attended to, they are, even to a visitor, offensive beyond description. How noxious, therefore, to people constantly confined in these prisons! One cause why the rooms in some prisons are so close is the window-tax, which the jailers have to pay: this tempts them to stop the windows, and stifle the prisoners.”

Before proceeding to describe what labors Howard entered upon after the publication of his work, we may pause to give some account of his appearance and mode of life. He was a man of slight form, thin, and rather beneath the average height. The most notable feature in his face was his eyes, which were lively and penetrating. His manner was soft and courteous; when reciting some of the scenes of horror he had witnessed, a tear would be seen to trickle down his cheek; when relating an instance of harshness and oppression, he would express himself with a fiery indignation, which would somewhat surprise those who had hitherto been listening to his tranquil conversation. In his dress he was remarkably neat, and he paid great

attention to his ablutions. When asked how he managed to preserve himself from the infection with which he was constantly coming into contact, he replied, "Next to the free goodness and mercy of the Author of my being, temperance and cleanliness are my preservatives. Trusting in divine Providence, and believing myself in the way of my duty, I visit the most noxious cells; and while thus employed I fear no evil." In his diet he was abstemious in the extreme. Animal food and all alcoholic liquors were utterly abjured by him; water and the simplest vegetables sufficing for his ordinary wants, while milk, tea, butter, and fruit were occasionally indulged in as luxuries. Though he himself never drank wine, yet we are told it was always provided, and that of the best quality, for his friends who chose to take it. Though strictly economical in his personal habits, Howard was the very antithesis of meanness. While travelling, he feed all who waited upon him handsomely. He used sensibly to remark, that in the expenses of a journey which must necessarily cost three or four hundred pounds, twenty or thirty pounds extra was not worth a thought, especially when by its expenditure a large amount of valuable time could be spared to him. In his journeys his usual rate of travel was forty miles a day. When he arrived at any town where he intended to pass the night he would go to the best hotel, order his dinner, with beer and wine, like any other traveller, and stipulate that his own servant should wait on him at table. When the cloth was laid, and the host had departed, his servant would quietly remove the luxuries from the table to the sideboard, while his eccentric master would busy himself in cooking his homely repast of bread-and-milk, upon which he would then banquet with much satisfaction.

In this connection it may be as well to mention the one serious charge that has ever been brought against Howard's character—that of harshness to his son. That unfortunate lad, after a career of vice which embittered his father's later years, ended his life in a mad-house. After Howard's death certain apocryphal anecdotes of his severity were promulgated, all of

which, it is satisfactory to be able to say, have been often and conclusively refuted. It is agreed on all hands, however, that Howard was a strict disciplinarian; and it is very possible that, though he entertained a deep and tender affection for his son, and acted with the best intentions, his treatment of him may not have been very judicious. From earliest infancy he trained up his child in the habit of implicit obedience. When he was an infant, and cried from passion, his father took him, laid him quietly in his lap, and neither spoke nor moved, "which process, a few times repeated, had such an effect, that the child, if crying ever so violently, was rendered quiet the instant his father took him." Such an authority did he acquire over him, that Howard himself once said that "if he told the boy to put his finger in the fire he believed he would do it." One cannot but see that Howard relied too much upon fear and too little upon love as the leading element in education. "His friends," says Mr. Brown, "and among the rest the most intimate of them, the Rev. Mr. Smith, thought that in the case of his son he carried his patriarchal ideas rather too far, and that by a lad of his temper he would have been more respected, and would have possessed more real authority over him, had he attempted to convince him of the reasonableness of his commands, instead of always enforcing obedience to them on his parental authority."

With the publication of his work on prisons Howard by no means considered his labors ended. His attention being called to the condition of convict hulks, he was examined on the subject before a committee of the House of Commons in April, 1778. To it he gave an account of his visit to the *Justitia* hulk, in which he stated that he saw the convicts together upon deck; and walking twice round them, he looked into the face of every person, and found by their miserable appearance that there was some mismanagement in those who had the care of them. Many had no shirts, some no waistcoats, and others no shoes. What follows is very characteristic of the mode in which Howard conducted his inquiries. He asked the captain



for a specimen of the kind of biscuit that was supplied them. It was given him, and found to be wholesome and of excellent quality. Howard could not reconcile this with the sickly looks he saw around him, so he quietly pocketed the biscuit. He waited to see the convicts' messes weighed out, and ascertained that the broken biscuit actually given to them was green and mouldy, though what the captain showed him, as a sample, was fresh and wholesome. Turning upon him with indignation, he reproached him for his falsehood, and producing the sample biscuit, showed it to him in presence of the whole crew. We can easily imagine with what horror those conscious of neglect and wrong-doing would regard a man who went to work after this fashion.

Desirous of making a more minute survey of foreign prisons, Howard, in 1778, travelled through Holland, Flanders, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and part of France. In a letter written from Berlin to his friend the Rev. Thomas Smith, he says: "We are just on the eve of a very important event, the King of Prussia in Silesia, and the Emperor encamped within a few miles of him. Forty thousand men ready to destroy each other, as the prejudices or passions of an arbitrary monarchy may direct. This would be a matter of great concern to a thinking mind, had it not the firm belief of a wise and overruling Providence. I hope in about a fortnight to be clear of the armies, and to be at or near Vienna, till which time a thought of England is too distant. . . . Please, sir, to tell John Prole (his servant) I observe the contents of his letter, I shall write in five or six weeks, and that I must build no more cottages till I have quite done with my jail schemes." All his thoughts, we can easily see, were now quite absorbed by his great enterprise. A fortune of £15,000 left him by his sister in the previous year he resolved to devote entirely to the good work, as he knew that his son was otherwise amply provided for.

To trace Howard's footsteps as he pursued his work from town to town and from country to country would lead us greatly beyond our limits; so we must confine ourselves to re-



cording a few salient features of his excursions. While at Prague he paid a visit to one of the principal monasteries of the Capuchin friars. To his surprise he found them, though it was a fast-day, seated comfortably round a luxuriously furnished table. He was requested to sit down and partake of the feast; but, to their surprise and consternation, he indignantly refused, saying that he thought they had retired from the world to a life of abstemiousness and prayer, but he found, on the contrary, that their monastery was a house of revelling and drunkenness. He added that he was going to Rome, and that he should take care that the Pope was made acquainted with the impropriety of their conduct. Alarmed, or affecting to be alarmed, at this threat, next morning four or five of the penitent monks waited on him at his hotel, asking him to pardon them, and imploring him not to say anything of what had passed to the Pope or to any of the officers of the Holy See. To this Howard replied that he would make no promise on the subject, but would merely say that, if he heard the offence was not repeated, he might probably be silent on what had passed. The deputation thereupon gave him a solemn assurance that no such violation of their rules should again be permitted in their time, and then withdrew.

Proceeding from Prague to Vienna, Howard remained in the city fifteen days, during which occurred an incident which well shows his intrepid and resolute spirit. In Le Maison de Bourreau, the principal jail of Vienna, there were a number of horrible dungeons. Of one of those he thus speaks: "Here, as usual, I inquired whether they had any putrid fever, and was answered in the negative. But in one of the dark dungeons, down twenty-four steps, I thought I had found a person with the jail-fever. He was loaded with heavy irons, and chained to the wall: anguish and misery appeared with tears clotted on his face. He was not capable of speaking to me; but on examining his breast and feet for *petechiæ*, or spots, and finding he had a strong intermitting pulse, I was convinced he was not ill of that disorder. A prisoner in an opposite cell told me

that the poor creature had desired him to call out for assistance, and he added that he had done it, but was not heard. This is one of the bad effects of dungeons."

About the end of the year Howard arrived in England, having traversed about 4600 miles of the Continent. After a short interval of rest, he, in 1779, revisited all the counties of England and Wales, and travelled into Scotland and Ireland, going over altogether close upon 7000 miles. The results of these two excursions he communicated to the world in an appendix to his book, which appeared in 1780. In 1781 he travelled into Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Germany, and Holland. Having frequently heard that in the Russian dominions capital punishment was abolished, Howard resolved to find out whether it really was so. Accordingly, he hired a hackney-coach, and drove to the house of the man who inflicted the knout. The man was alarmed at a person having the appearance of one in authority entering his door, and Howard endeavored to increase his confusion by the tone, aspect, and manner which he assumed. He commenced by telling him that if his answers to the questions he was to put to him were true, he had nothing to fear. The man promised that they should be so. Howard then asked, "Can you inflict the knout in such a manner as to occasion death in a short time?" "Yes, I can," was the reply. "In how short a time?" "In a day or two." "Have you ever so inflicted it?" "I have." "Have you lately?" "Yes, the last man who was punished by my hands with the knout died of the punishment." "In what manner do you thus render it mortal?" "By one or two strokes on the sides, which carry off large pieces of flesh." "Do you receive orders thus to inflict the punishment?" "I do." So much for the boasted clemency of the Russian punishment!

After a tour through the English prisons, and another visit to the Continent, Howard, in 1784, incorporated all the information he had gathered in a third and final edition of his work. In the same year he settled quietly at Cardington, apparently

intending to pass the remainder of his years there in peace. But he was not long in finding that his true peace was not to be found in luxurious retirement, but in energetic efforts for the good of his fellow-creatures. During his inquiries into the state of prisons his attention had been much directed to the spread of infectious disease. Turning the subject over and over again in his mind, he at length determined to devote the remainder of his life to an attempt to combat the giant pestilence that then so desolated Europe under the dreaded name of "The Plague." "It was a grand idea this—that he would lead the way to some general scheme, to be adopted throughout Europe and the contiguous parts of Asia, for checking the incursions of, and perhaps finally exterminating, the plague. For no object did he suffer so much or expose himself to so great dangers: embarking purposely in a vessel with a foul bill of health, and undergoing the perilous confinement of the lazaretto, that every practice of the quarantine might be thoroughly known to him. Nowhere was his conduct more heroic. It cannot be said here, however, that his object was equally well chosen, or that his labors were attended with any good result. While it would be difficult to over-estimate the value of his service as inspector-general of the prisons of Europe, we can detect nothing in this latter scheme but an unfortunate waste of heroic benevolence. In dealing with jails and houses of correction, he was dealing with evils the nature of which he and all men could well understand; but, in dealing with the pestilence, he was utterly in the dark as to the very nature of the calamity he was encountering. It is very probable that, had he realized his utmost wishes, and had built a lazaretto on the most improved plan, combining every valuable regulation he had observed in every lazaretto of Europe, it would only have proved an additional nuisance."\*

Whatever the practical value of his labors, Howard's noble heroism never shone with a brighter lustre than when engaged

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\* *Blackwood's Magazine*, January, 1850, art. *Howard*.

on this new expedition of philanthropy. Setting out in November, 1785, he proceeded first to France, with a view to inspect the lazaretto at Marseilles, which, owing to the jealousy of the French Government, he did with great danger and imminent risk of being committed to prison. From Marseilles he went to Toulon, and inspected the arsenal and the condition of the galley-slaves, disguising himself as a French gentleman of the first fashion. From France he made his way to Italy, thence to Malta, thence to Smyrna, thence to Constantinople, and from Constantinople to Venice, everywhere investigating the condition of the hospitals on his route. At Venice he resolved upon the perilous experiment of undergoing quarantine in the lazaretto, in order that he might by practical experience ascertain what the treatment there really was. "My apartment at the lazaretto," he writes in one of his letters, "was as offensive as a sick-ward is at night, the Venetians being very dirty (the walls probably not washed these fifty years). I soon lost all stomach to my bread and tea, and was listless, as I have known several persons in similar circumstances by their confinement in our jails. I talked of lime-washing my room, but I soon found the prejudice the Venetians had against it; so I privately procured a quarter of a bushel of lime, and, a few days after, proper brushes. Early one morning, three hours before my guard was up, I began with my valet, who was sent to light my fires (having determined to lock up my guard if he opposed me); and slacking the fresh lime at different times, always with *boiling* water (my brick walls and ceiling being before brushed down), we washed every part of my room, and afterward the floor, with boiling water, and finished our job by noon; so that at four o'clock I drank my tea, and at night lay in a sweet and fresh room; and in a few days my appetite and strength returned."

While in Venice, Howard received intelligence that a project was on foot in London to erect a statue in his honor. For such public demonstration of respect he had no taste, and he regarded the plan with insuperable aversion. "Oh," he wrote,



“why could not my friends, who know how much I detest such parade, have stopped such a hasty measure? As a private man, with some peculiarities, I wished to retire into obscurity and silence. Indeed, my friend, I cannot bear the thought of being thus dragged out. I immediately wrote, and hope something may be done to stop it. My best friends must disapprove it. It damps and confounds all my schemes. My exaltation is my fall—my misfortune.” In a letter to his old servant, John Prole, he thus refers to it: “As to another affair, it distresses my mind; whoever set it afoot I know not, but sure I am they were totally unacquainted with my temper and disposition. I once before, on an application to sit for my picture to be placed in public, hesitated not a moment in showing my aversion to it; and as I knew I was going on a dangerous expedition, Thomas will remember almost the last words I said to him were: ‘If I die abroad, do not let me be moved; let there be only a plain slip of marble placed under that of my wife Henrietta, with this inscription—“John Howard, died —, aged —: *My hope is in Christ.*”’” As soon as he returned to England he wrote a letter to the gentlemen who had undertaken to collect subscriptions, requesting them to lay aside their project. Out of £1533 which had been collected, about £500 was returned to the donors, part was spent in obtaining the discharge of a certain number of poor debtors, part in the striking of a medal in memory of Howard, and the residue was applied toward erecting, after his death, a statue to him in St. Paul’s Cathedral.

It was in the beginning of 1787 that Howard returned to England. During the two following years we find him surveying (for the last time, as it proved) the state of the prisons of Great Britain and Ireland, and in reducing to order the materials he had collected in his recent Continental journey. The result of his labors appeared in 1789, in the form of a work entitled “An Account of the Principal Lazarettos of Europe, with Papers Relative to the Plague.” In an appendix were some remarks on the state of British prisons. In the



conclusion of the book he announced his intention of revisiting Turkey, Russia, and some other countries, and extending his tour into the East. "I am not insensible," he writes, "of the dangers that must attend such a journey. Trusting, however, in the protection of that kind Providence which has hitherto preserved me, I calmly and cheerfully commit myself to the disposal of unerring wisdom. Should it please God to cut off my life in the prosecution of this design, let not my conduct be uncandidly imputed to rashness or enthusiasm, but to a serious, deliberate conviction that I am pursuing the path of *duty*, and to a sincere desire of being made an instrument of more extensive usefulness to my fellow-creatures than could be expected in the narrower circle of a retired life."

In July, 1789, the veteran philanthropist quitted England for the last time. He left with a clear foreboding that he would return no more. "I have had several malignant disorders," he said to one friend; "yet I am persuaded that I shall not return and be permitted to lay my bones in my native land. If, however, I should, I think I shall then have done all that duty can require of me; and I shall most probably seek a peaceful retirement for the rest of my days." To another friend he said, "You will probably never see me again; but, be that as it may, it is not matter of serious concern to me whether I lay down my life in Turkey, in Egypt, in Asia Minor, or elsewhere. My whole endeavor is to fulfil, according to the ability of so weak an instrument, the will of that gracious Providence who has condescended to raise in me a firm persuasion that I am employed in what is consonant to his divine will." Having passed through Holland and part of Prussia, Howard, toward the end of the year, arrived at Cherson, a village on the Dnieper, near the Crimea. Visiting there a young lady whose friends were anxious he should prescribe for her, he caught a malignant fever, and it soon became apparent that there was no hope of his recovery. Throughout all his illness he conducted himself with admirable patience and fortitude. To his friend, Admiral Priestman, who called

on him, he said, "Priestman, you may style this a dull conversation, and endeavor to divert my mind from dwelling upon death, but I entertain very different sentiments. Death has no terrors for me; it is an event I always look to with cheerfulness, if not with pleasure; and, be assured, the subject is more grateful to me than any other. I am well aware that I have but a short time to live: my mode of life has rendered it impossible that I should get rid of this fever. If I had lived as you do, eating heartily of animal food and drinking wine, I might, perhaps, by altering my diet, be able to subdue it. But how can such a man as I am lower my diet, who have been accustomed for years to exist upon vegetables and water, a little bread, and a little tea? I have no method of lowering my nourishment, and therefore I must die." His prognostication was right. On January 20, 1790, his brave and humble spirit passed away.

Thus died John Howard, to the last a faithful laborer in the noble work he had set himself to do. Probably it was the death he himself would have chosen—to be stricken down while employed in philanthropy, and to die on the scene of his labors. Howard is a name of which all Englishmen are proud; and, indeed, they may well be so. In him were summed up some of the most characteristic excellences of the English character—its veracity, its indomitable perseverance, its constant tendency toward the practical.

In one of Mr. Carlyle's most dyspeptic writings, the tract on Model Prisons in the "*Latter-day Pamphlets*," occurs a famous passage on Howard. It is worth quoting, partly because, whatever we may think of Carlyle as a practical politician, few will deny that he was one of the manliest and most straight-seeing writers this generation has seen, and partly because it is interesting to see how Howard's work impressed one who had no sympathy with the philanthropic movement of which he was the cause. "Howard," says he, "is a beautiful philanthropist, eulogized by Burke, and in most men's minds a sort of beatified individual. How glorious, having finished off one's

affairs in Bedfordshire, or, in fact, finding them very dull, inane, and worthy of being quitted and got away from, to set out on a cruise over the jails, first of Britain; then, finding that answer, over the jails of the habitable globe! 'A voyage of discovery, a circumnavigation of charity; to collate distresses, to gauge wretchedness, to take the dimensions of human misery;' really it is very fine. Captain Cook's voyage for the Terra Australis, Ross's, Franklin's for the ditto Borealis: men make various cruises and voyages in this world—for want of money, want of work, and one or the other want—which are attended with their difficulties too, and do not make the cruiser a demi-god. On the whole, I have myself nothing but respect, comparatively speaking, for the dull, solid Howard, and his 'benevolence,' and other impulses that set him cruising. Heaven had grown weary of jail-fevers, and other the *unjust* penalties inflicted upon scoundrels—for scoundrels, too, and even the very Devil, should not have *more* than their due; and Heaven, in its opulence, created a man to make an end of that. Created him; disgusted him with the grocer business; tried him with Calvinism, rural *ennui*, and sore bereavement in his Bedfordshire retreat—and, in short, at last got him set to work, and in a condition to achieve it. For which I am thankful to Heaven, and do also, with doffed hat, humbly salute John Howard. A practical, solid man, if a dull and even dreary one; 'carries his weighing-scales in his pocket;' when your jailer answers, 'The prisoner's allowance of food is so and so, and we observe it sacredly; here, for example, is a ration.' 'Hey! a ration this?' and solid John suddenly produces his weighing-scales, weighs it, marks down in his tablets what the actual quantity of it is. That is the act and manner of the man. A man full of English accuracy; English veracity, solidity, simplicity; by whom this universal jail-commission, not to be paid for in money, but far otherwise, is set about, with all the slow energy, the patience, practicality, sedulity, and sagacity, common to the best English commissioners paid in money, and not exactly otherwise."

Making allowance for the cynical tone common to all Mr. Carlyle's later writings, and bearing in mind the fact that Carlyle had no real sympathy either with men of Howard's character or with the kind of work he accomplished, this estimate appears to us not far from the truth. A man of intellectual brilliance Howard was not; he had no literary tastes; his views about most things were, we may suppose, of a decidedly commonplace character; he had little even of that enthusiastic fervor which renders association with some men so stimulating and refreshing. But, for the special work he was called upon to do, no one could have been found better adapted than he. His very defects, the coldness of his nature, his commonplace way of looking at things, his dulness and stolidity, combined to suit him for it. Nor was his toil in vain—few philanthropists, if any, have ever lived whose labors have resulted in so much good. He truly did much “to open the eyes and hearts of all mankind.” Even in his lifetime the results of his work were plainly manifested; and since then all the noble army who have devoted their energies to the improvement of our criminal population have followed his footsteps, and have been influenced by his example. Some with finer sensibilities and more delicate natures—such as Elizabeth Fry, with that charity “which no labor can weary, no ingratitude detach, no horrors disgust; that toils, that pardons, that suffers; that is seen by no man, and honored by no man; but, like the great laws of Nature, does the work of God in silence, and looks to future and to better worlds for its reward”—have toiled personally in the prisons of our land, and endeavored to turn those in them from good to evil. Others of sharp, keen, practical intellects, such as Jeremy Bentham, have busied themselves in devising houses of correction based on strictly scientific principles. All alike own Howard as their master. We cannot better conclude than with the just and noble words of Bentham, who, in speaking of the literary defects of Howard's writings, says: “My venerable friend was much better employed than in arranging words and sentences. Instead of doing

what so many could do if they would, what he did for the service of mankind was what scarce any man *could* have done, and no man *would* do, but himself. In the scale of moral desert the labors of the legislator and the writer are as far below his as the earth is below heaven. His was the truly Christian choice; the lot in which is to be found the least of that which selfish nature covets, and the most of what it shrinks from. His kingdom was of a better world; he died a martyr after living an apostle."







## THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE-TRADE.

*WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.*

THERE are few periods of English Parliamentary life to which lovers of their country can look back with more pride than to the latter part of the eighteenth century. The great questions which then fell to be discussed—the American War, the Impeachment of Warren Hastings, the French Revolution and its results—were dealt with by men of power equal to the occasion. Never, perhaps, has such a galaxy of great speakers shone in the House of Commons. Then flourished Burke, with his splendid imagination and gorgeous rhetoric; Fox, with his noble generosity of nature, his ardent love of freedom, and his power of keen, rapid, decisive argument; Pitt, with his dignified composure, his calm self-confidence, and his majestic eloquence; and Sheridan, shifty, indeed, and utterly wanting in moral weight, but sarcastic, clever, and brilliant. In addition to these great stars, a number of lesser luminaries adorned the Parliamentary firmament, many of whom, in an age less favored by fortune, would have been proudly followed as leader. Among them were the cool and judicious Dundas, the generous and high-souled Windham, the straightforward and manly Grenville, the brilliant and accomplished Canning. In this secondary group the name which stands at the head of this chapter occupied no mean position. But it is not as a polished speaker or as an eloquent debater that men love to dwell upon the memory of Wilberforce; it was not for these qualities that on his death it could with truth be said of him that “for departed kings there are appointed honors, and the



WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

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wealthy have their gorgeous obsequies; it was his noble portion to clothe a people with spontaneous mourning, and to go down to the grave amid the benedictions of the poor." It is as the leader of the crusade against the iniquitous slave-trade, as the gentle and kindly philanthropist, that he occupies his lofty pedestal in the gallery of fame; as the man who contentedly gave up the pursuit of place and power, and devoted his time, his talents, and his wealth, in order that a monstrous injustice should be swept away. It often saddens one to find between the leader of a great reform and the reform itself a wide discrepancy: the work seems so great and massive and noble; the man seems so weak and little and contemptible. There is no such discrepancy in the case of Wilberforce. Apart altogether from the great part he played in slave-trade abolition, his life is well worth studying, as that of a man of pure, fresh, generous, unsullied nature, who always endeavored to apply his gifts to the highest uses, and who was without a taint of malice, or envy, or uncharitableness.

William Wilberforce was born at Hull, on the 24th of August, 1759—the year which witnessed the birth of his illustrious friend, William Pitt. He was the third child of his parents, but their only son. He came of an ancient and wealthy family, to which the township of Wilberfoss, eight miles from York, had given a name. His grandfather, who altered the spelling into Wilberforce, was the head of a Baltic house in Hull, of which his father, later on, became a partner. Wilberforce was a child of feeble frame, small stature, and troubled with a weakness in his eyes which more or less tormented him throughout life. His stature continued extremely small, and in his late years, by continual contortion, he had, though naturally well-shaped, brought himself nearly into the form of the letter Z.\*

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\* For this fact we are indebted to an article in the *Quarterly Review*, vol. lxii., which, from the frequent use of italics, the affectation of private and special information, the badness of its style, and its carping and ungenerous spirit, we believe we are right in attributing to the pen of John Wilson Croker.

So sickly, indeed, was he, that in after-life "it was among the many expressions of his gratitude that he was not born in less civilized times, when it would have been thought impossible to rear so delicate a child." When seven years old he was sent to the Grammar-school at Hull, of which Joseph Milner was head-master. Even then, we are told, his elocution was so remarkable, that he used to be set on a table and made to read aloud, as an example to the other boys. The main feature of Wilberforce's oratory throughout life was his pre-eminently sweet and musical voice.

When Wilberforce had been at this school for two years his father died, and he was sent to reside with an uncle, living by turns at Wimbledon and St. James's Place. The school he was here sent to seems to have been a very wretched one. It was, he himself said, a place where "they taught everything and nothing," and where the food with which they were supplied was so nauseous that he could not eat it. His residence with his uncle, however, was not destined to be of very long duration. His aunt, whose principles were of the kind then called "Methodistical," exercised a powerful influence over him, and turned his mind with great force in a religious direction. Rumors of the child's seriousness were received with great alarm by his friends in Hull, and it was at once determined that his mother should repair to London, and remove him from what was considered such dangerous influence. "Billy," said his grandfather to him, judiciously combining promise and threat, "shall travel with Milner as soon as he is of age; but if Billy turns Methodist he shall not have a sixpence of mine."

On his arrival at Hull, Wilberforce was introduced into a kind of society very different from that to which he had been accustomed in his uncle's house. Hull was then a very gay place; the theatre, balls, great suppers, and card-parties were the delight of the principal families in the town. The usual dinner-hour was two o'clock, and at six they met at sumptuous suppers. At first Wilberforce had little relish for this sort of life; gradually, however, he came to like it, and his voice and



love of music made him an acceptable guest at every party. But even while living a life of pleasure he gave proofs of an active mind, and one remarkable anticipation of his future course deserves to be recorded. "His abomination of the slave-trade," one of his school-fellows has related, "he evinced when he was not more than fourteen years of age. He boarded in the master's house, where the boys were kept within bounds. Once he gave me a letter to put into the post-office, addressed to the editor of the York paper, which he told me was in condemnation of the odious traffic in human flesh." A promising feature of Wilberforce at this time was, that he cultivated a taste for literature, and displayed considerable aptitude for it, greatly excelling all the other boys in his compositions, though he devoted very little time to them.

At the age of seventeen Wilberforce entered St. John's College, Cambridge. The state of the English Universities, "steeped in port and prejudice," was then very bad, and St. John's College was no exception to the general rule. "I was introduced," he says, "on the very first night of my arrival to as licentious a set of men as can be conceived. They drank hard, and their conversation was even worse than their lives. I lived among them for some time, though I never relished their society—often, indeed, I was horror-struck at their conduct—and after the first year I shook off all connection with them." During the last two years of his University life he associated with a higher circle of pleasant, good-humored, jovial fellows, with whom he became an immense favorite. "There was always a great Yorkshire pie in his room, and all were welcome to partake of it," writes the Rev. T. Gisborne. "My rooms and his were back to back, and often, when I was raking out my fire at ten o'clock, I heard his melodious voice calling aloud to me to come and sit with him before I went to bed. It was a dangerous thing to do, for his amusing conversation was sure to keep me up so late that I was behindhand the next morning." Among Wilberforce's associates a great number were fellows of the college, of whose conduct he afterward

spoke in terms of severe reprobation. "Those," he says, "with whom I was intimate did not act toward me the part of Christians or even of honest men. Their object seemed to be to make and keep me idle. If ever I appeared studious they would say to me, 'Why in the world should a man of your fortune trouble yourself with fagging?' I was a good classic, and acquitted myself well in the college examination; but mathematics, which my mind greatly needed, I almost entirely neglected, and was told I was too clever to require them. While my companions were reading hard and attending lectures, card-parties and idle amusements consumed my time. The tutors would often say within my hearing that '*they* were mere saps, but that I did all by talent.' This was poison to a mind constituted like mine." Though idle and jovial, Wilberforce's student-life appears to have been in no sense a dissolute one; indeed, he was often complimented on being better than young men in general.

The mercantile house which his grandfather had founded at Hull had been managed for Wilberforce during his minority by his cousin, Abel Smith; but his ample fortune and taste for liberal pursuits made him decline business, and even before he quitted college he had resolved to enter upon public life. While as yet under age, a dissolution being expected, he offered himself as candidate for his native town. To become a member of Parliament in those days required in most cases no small amount of money and ingenuity; for the electors were scandalously venal, and the candidate, having the fear of the Bribery Act before his eyes, needed no little cleverness to shirk its provisions. At Hull, by long-established custom, the single vote of a resident elector was rewarded with a donation of two guineas, four were paid for a plumper, and the expenses of a freeman's journey from London averaged ten pounds apiece. That the letter of the law might not be broken, the money was not paid till the last day on which election petitions could be presented. Wilberforce's memory in his latter years was stored with droll anecdotes of this election. As his allies did not dis-

tain muscular aid, he was taken to visit an athletic butcher. He rather shrunk from shaking hands with him, saying to one of his staunch supporters that he thought it going rather too low for votes. "Oh, sir," was the reply, "he is a fine fellow, if you come to bruising!" The day following the election the butcher came to Wilberforce and said, "I have found out who threw the stone at you, and I'll kill him to-night." The threat was seriously meant, and Wilberforce was forced to repress his zeal by suggesting that it would be too severe a punishment for what had proved, after all, a harmless attempt. "You must only frighten him." By his energy, his popularity, and his money Wilberforce was returned triumphantly by an immense majority. The election cost him between £8000 and £9000—about eight pounds each for every vote which he had polled.

As soon as young Wilberforce went up to London, to perform his duties as member for Hull, he was received with open arms by the leaders of London fashionable and political society. From Mr. Trevelyan's admirable "*Early Years of Charles James Fox*" an excellent idea may be formed of the sort of life young men of quality led about the time of which we are now writing; how dissolute and reckless it was, how free from all moral obligations, how totally without any high ideal or any elevated principle. Wilberforce was soon initiated into the coteries of fashionable society by becoming a member of all the great clubs—Miles's, Brookes's, Boodle's, White's, and Goosetree's. Gambling was then the most fashionable vice, and for a time he indulged in it; more than once, as we learn from a diary he kept at this period, losing £100 at faro. The manner in which he was cured of the practice is noteworthy. On one particular night he won £600. Much of this was lost by younger sons who could not meet the call without inconvenience, and Wilberforce was so impressed by the pain and annoyance his victory must cause that he abandoned gambling forever. His principal friend at this time was William Pitt, with whom he had formed a slight acquaintance while at Cambridge, and to whom he always continued strongly attached.

Though Wilberforce was a constant attender on the debates in the House of Commons, he was in no hurry to deliver his maiden speech. "Attend to business," he said long afterward to a friend entering the House, "and do not seek occasions of display; if you have a turn for speaking, the proper time will come. Let speaking take care of itself. I never go out of the way to speak, but make myself acquainted with the business, and then, if the debate passes my door, I step out and join it." It was on the 17th of May, 1781, that his voice was first heard in Parliament, in a debate on the Revenue Laws. Wilberforce's Parliamentary career at this time is of little interest, and need not be dwelt upon. Of more attractiveness is his visit, with his friends Pitt and Elliot, to France in the autumn of 1783, during which he saw Lafayette, whom he describes as "a pleasing, enthusiastical man;" was introduced to the King and Queen, and conversed with Benjamin Franklin and many other notabilities. "The Queen," he writes, in a letter to a friend, "is a monarch of most engaging manners and appearance. The King is so strange a being (of the hog kind), that it is worth going a hundred miles to see him, especially a boar-hunting. They all, men and women, crowded round Pitt in shoals; and he behaved with great spirit, though he was sometimes a little bored when they talked to him about the Parliamentary Reform. They are certainly, we have every reason to say, a most obliging people; and we all returned from Fontainebleau charmed with our reception." In the end of October the party returned to England.

In the spring of 1784 Wilberforce stood as candidate for the great constituency of Yorkshire, and was elected. His friend Pitt had become Prime-minister; and Parliament had been dissolved, in order that it might be decided whether he or the Coalition, formed by the union of Fox and North, was to rule the country. How triumphantly the country decided in Pitt's favor, and how completely and ignominiously the ill-fated Coalition was defeated, is known to every reader of English history. The story of Wilberforce's candidature for York-



shire forms one of the most interesting chapters of electioneering annals. A county meeting had been called, and late in the day, when an address to the King against the Coalition had been moved, Wilberforce rose to address the gathering. It was a rough, stormy day; the meeting was crowded and noisy; and it was feared that a man of his feeble physical powers would not be able to make himself heard. This fear proved utterly unfounded. "I saw a shrimp mount upon the table," said Boswell to Dundas, "but as I listened it grew and grew, until the shrimp had grown into a whale." Though opposed by the combined influence of the great Whig Yorkshire landlords, the Fitzwilliams, the Cavendishes, etc., Wilberforce daily advanced in popular favor, until at length his adversaries retreated from the field, and at twenty-five years of age he was returned member for the largest constituency in the kingdom.

No sooner was the election over than Wilberforce made a second visit to the Continent, accompanied by Isaac Milner, brother of his former tutor. The perusal, along with Milner, of a copy of Doddridge's "Rise and Progress" made a deep impression on his mind at this time. During a second tour in 1785 the conversation between him and Milner turned much on religious subjects, and the impression formerly communicated was strengthened. A passage in a letter from Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster, written in August, 1785, shows in what direction his thoughts were turning. "At present," he says, "I have the same unalterable affection for Old England, founded, as I think, in reason, or, as foreigners would tell me, in prejudice; but I feel sometimes affected with a little of your own anxiety—I fancy I see storms arising, which, already 'no bigger than a man's hand,' will by-and-by overspread and blacken the whole face of heaven. It is not the confusion of parties, and their quarrelling and battling in the House of Commons, which makes me despair of the Republic (if I knew a word half-way between 'apprehend for' and 'despair' that would best express my meaning), but it is the universal corrup-



tion and profligacy of the times, which, taking its rise among the rich and luxurious, has now extended its baneful influence and spread its destructive poison through the whole body of the people. When the mass of blood is corrupt there is no remedy but amputation." From this year may be dated a great change upon Wilberforce's character. Hitherto he had been careless about religious matters; he now became deeply religious. Balls, concerts, and fashionable amusements were gradually given up as he began to take a more serious view of life; and his sweet and gentle disposition and his high talents were used for higher objects than had as yet engaged his attention.

In the year 1787 was seen the first practical indication of the change that had come over him. Through the influence of Pitt he obtained the issuing of a royal proclamation for the discouragement of vice, and set about organizing an association for the same object. "The barbarous custom of hanging," he wrote to one of his friends, "has been tried too long, and with the success which might have been expected from it. The most effectual way to prevent the greater crimes is by punishing the smaller, and by endeavoring to repress that general spirit of licentiousness which is the parent of every species of vice. I know that by regulating the external conduct we do not at first change the hearts of men, but even they are ultimately to be wrought upon by such means, and we should at least so far remove the obtrusiveness of the temptation, that it may not provoke the appetite, which might otherwise be dormant and inactive." The society, of which most of the bishops and many other leading men became members, was soon in active and useful operation. In the autumn of that year it was so well established as no longer to require Wilberforce's personal supervision. He accordingly left London, and, after a short time in Devonshire, went to Bath. "I find here," writes Hannah More, "a great many friends; but those with whom I have chiefly passed my time are Mr. Wilberforce's family. That young gentleman's character is one of the most ex-

traordinary I ever knew for talents, virtue, and piety. It is difficult not to grow wiser and better every time one converses with him."

We now come to what was the main work of Wilberforce's life—his struggle for the abolition of the slave-trade. It is this which constitutes his main title to be remembered; it is for this that his name is cherished by thousands who would never have heard of him had he been known only as a talented politician. Other men besides Wilberforce did much to do away with the shameful traffic—notably Granville Sharp and Clarkson. It was through the former that the great principle was established, that whenever a slave sets foot on British soil he is free. James Somerset, an African slave, was brought to England by his master in 1769; some time afterward he left his master, who took an opportunity of seizing him, and conveyed him on board a ship, to be taken to Jamaica as a slave. Granville Sharp "supplied the money, the leisure, the perseverance, and the learning required for the great controversy;" the case was pleaded with great care before the Judges in 1772, with the final result that it was established, to use Curran's eloquent words, "as the spirit of the British law, that liberty is inseparable from British soil; that, no matter in what language the man's doom may have been pronounced, no matter what complexion incompatible with freedom an African or an Indian sun may have burnt upon him, no matter in what disastrous battle his liberties may have been cloven down, no matter with what solemnities he may have been devoted upon the altar of slavery, the first moment he touches the sacred soil of Britain the altar and the god sink together in the dust."

The manner in which Clarkson was first led to devote his attention to the slave-trade is somewhat singular. Dr. Peckard, Master of Magdalen College, Cambridge, was a strong opponent of the slave-trade, and in a sermon preached before the University bore solemn testimony against it. To him, in 1785, it officially devolved to appoint to the Bachelors of Arts the subject for two prize essays. In order that inquiry and dis-

cussion might be excited, he chose as the theme, "Is it right to make slaves of others against their will?" Among those who resolved to compete for the prize was Thomas Clarkson, then a young man of twenty-five years of age. At this time he had no interest whatever in the question of slavery; his sole aim when he began to write the essay was to win distinction. As facts gradually accumulated in his mind his interest in the subject began to increase; he collected together all the books he could hear of that bore upon slavery, and meditated the question night and morning. So intent was he on his task, that he constantly kept a light burning in his room, in order that, if any valuable thought presented itself to his mind, he might rise from his bed and note it down, lest even a single argument of importance should escape him. Clarkson won the prize. But this was the least important result of his labors. If the contents of the essay are true, he thought, it is time that some person should see these calamities to their end. Gradually he was brought to the conviction that he himself should devote his energies to the great task. He translated his Latin essay into English and published it; he travelled far and wide collecting information; and was the most active and energetic of a society formed in 1787 for the suppression of the slave-trade. In the same year Clarkson and Wilberforce were introduced to each other, and in the same year Wilberforce, after much thought and consultation, resolved to give notice of his intention to bring forward the subject in Parliament. "When I had acquired so much information on the subject," he writes, "I began to talk over the matter with Pitt and Grenville. Pitt recommended me to undertake its conduct, as a subject suited to my character and talents. At length, I well remember, after a conversation in the open air at the root of an old tree at Holwood, just above the steep descent into the vale of Keston, I resolved to give notice on a fit occasion to the House of Commons of my intention to bring the subject forward." The exact place where such a resolution was formed deserved to be remembered.

At first Wilberforce and many others regarded slave-trade abolition as a much easier thing than it proved to be. "The cause of our poor Africans," he wrote to a friend in January, 1788, "goes on most prosperously. I trust there is little reason to doubt of the motion for the abolition of this horrid traffic in flesh and blood being carried in Parliament. But yet for many reasons . . . it is highly desirable that the public voice should be exerted in our support as loudly and as universally as possible. Many places and some counties have already determined on petitions to Parliament, and I should be sorry that our little kingdom [Yorkshire] should be backward in its endeavors to rescue our fellow-creatures from misery, and retrieve our national character from foulest dishonor. I am persuaded that if a beginning is once made the work will go on with spirit." It was not, however, long before he perceived that the opposition he would have to encounter would be greatly more bitter and determined than he had anticipated. The majority of those who had a commercial interest in the traffic were naturally strongly opposed to its abolition; and though Pitt himself favored the cause, the majority of his colleagues in office were against it.

The first result of Pitt's leaning to abolition was an order, issued in 1788, of the Crown, that a Committee of the Privy Council should inquire into the state of the slave-trade, and its consequences to Africa, to the colonies, and to the general trade of the kingdom. How strongly the tide of popular feeling was beginning to turn in favor of the abolition of the traffic was conclusively shown by the fact, that before the end of the year over a hundred numerous signed petitions were presented to the House of Commons praying for the abolition of the slave-trade. It had been decided that Wilberforce should bring forward the subject this session (1788); but over-exertion in preparing himself for the conflict brought on a very serious attack of illness, and he was compelled to give up his Parliamentary duties for a time, and betake himself to Bath. "Behold me," he writes to one of his friends, from that place,



“a banished man from London and business. It is no more than I can expect if my constituents vote my seat abdicated, and proceed to the election of another representative. However, I trust I shall yet be enabled by God’s blessing to do the public and them some service. As to the slave question, I do not like to touch on it; it is so big a one it frightens me in my present weak state. Suffice it to say, and I know the pleasure it will afford you to hear it, that I trust matters are in a very good train. To you in strict confidence I will intrust, that Pitt, with a warmth of principle and friendship that have made me love him better than I ever did before, has taken on himself the arrangement of the business, and promises to do *all* for me if I desire it, that, if I were an efficient man, it would be proper for me to do myself. This is all I can now say; I might add more were we side by side on my sofa.” The promise thus made, Pitt fulfilled by, in May, 1788, moving a resolution that the House would, early in the next session, take into consideration the circumstances of the slave-trade complained of in the petitions. This resolution was strongly supported by Burke and Fox, the latter saying “that he had almost made up his mind to immediate abolition.”

During the session the anti-slavery party achieved one reform—not a very great one, indeed—still, it was the introduction of the thin end of the wedge. Some of Wilberforce’s principal supporters, among whom was the venerable Sir William Dolben, were led by curiosity to inspect with their own eyes the actual state of a slave-ship then fitting out in the Thames. This was when the spring of 1788 was so far advanced that the inquiry and discussion into the slave-trade had been put off by mutual consent until the following year. “But,” writes Wilberforce, “Sir W. Dolben and his friends came back to the House of Commons with a description which produced one universal feeling of pity, shame, and indignation. In particular, they found, in spite of the confidence with which it had been maintained that self-interest alone would suffice for securing kind treatment to the wretched victims of avarice,



that they were crowded into a space so miserably small as exceedingly to aggravate their sufferings, and cause, from the spread of infectious sickness, a prodigious mortality." At once it was resolved that such enormities should not exist unchecked even for another session, and a bill, limiting the number of slaves and providing some precautions against their sufferings, was proposed, and carried by a large majority.

So ill was Wilberforce that he was unable to come up to London to support this bill, which, after fierce and long-continued opposition, was carried on the 7th of July. Gradually he gathered strength, and was able to gratify his propensity to locomotion by taking a tour through various parts of England. As soon as he was able, he devoted himself with great intensity to preparing himself for the debate on slavery. "On full conviction from experience," he wrote in his diary for January 25, 1789, "that it is impossible for me to make myself master of the slave subject; and to go through my other various occupations, except I live more undistractedly, I determined scarce ever to dine out in parties, and in all respects to live with a view to these great matters until the slave business is brought to some conclusion." The various brief entries about matters connected with slavery in his diary at this time amply attest his diligence.

At length, on the 12th of May, 1789, Wilberforce brought the question before the House by moving twelve resolutions in which the opinions and objects of the abolitionists were recorded. The speech he made on this occasion was poorly reported, so that we can form only a very imperfect idea of its excellence. After attempting to disarm the hostility of West Indian opposition by describing the trade as a *national* iniquity, he surveyed the evidence, and traced the destructive effects of the trade on Africa, its victims, and the colonies. "Knowing," he said, "that mankind are governed by their sympathies"—he gave a thrilling account of the horrors of the Middle Passage—"so much misery crowded into so little room, where the aggregate of suffering must be multiplied by every individual

tale of woe," and summoned "Death as his last witness, whose infallible testimony to their unutterable wrongs can neither be purchased nor repelled." The speech, which lasted for upward of three hours, made a powerful impression on its hearers. Burke declared that the House, the nation, and Europe were under great and serious obligations to the honorable gentleman for having brought forward the subject in a manner the most masterly, impressive, and eloquent. "The principles," he said, "were so well laid down, and supported with so much force and order, that it equalled anything he had heard in modern times, and was not perhaps to be surpassed in the remains of Grecian eloquence." Bishop Porteous said that "it was one of the ablest and most eloquent speeches ever heard in that or any other place." "He was supported," he continues, "in the noblest manner by Mr. Pitt, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Fox, who all agreed in declaring that the slave-trade was the disgrace and opprobrium of this country, and that nothing but entire abolition could cure so monstrous an evil. It was a glorious night for this country." In spite of Wilberforce's eloquence and the strong support it received, the friends of the planters succeeded in deferring the decision of the House until counsel had been heard, and thus protracted the settlement of the matter to so late a period of the session that it was of necessity postponed. Letters of congratulation to Wilberforce on his speech flowed in from all quarters. "I congratulate you sincerely," wrote Erskine, "on the auspicious appearances which have followed from the exertion of very great talents in a very great cause."

One of the chief arguments of the opponents of abolition was, that if England abandoned the trade in slaves, France would be sure to take it up, and thus secure a commercial pre-eminence. So deeply felt was this objection, that we find Earl (then Mr.) Grey avowing that it formed his principal difficulty, and would probably induce him, in spite of his feelings, to give a silent vote against the abolition. "If France alone," he said, "would consent to abolish this detestable and inhuman traffic,

the proposed plan would not have a more zealous supporter than myself." On the outbreak of the French Revolution, Wilberforce had thoughts of going to Paris, to endeavor to induce the French Government to abolish slavery. From this he was dissuaded by the strong remonstrances of Pitt and Addington. Instead of him Clarkson was despatched, who, for a time, took a very sanguine view of the situation. "In eight or ten days," he wrote exultingly in one of his letters, "the subject will be brought before the National Assembly. Evidence will not be necessary; and I should not be surprised if the French were to do themselves the honor of voting away this diabolical traffic in a night." His high hopes were destined to be blasted, and this expedition to France proved one of the most unfortunate circumstances for the abolitionists that ever happened. When all England was thrilled with the horrors being perpetrated in France, one of the most popular arguments of the anti-abolitionists was, that they could not countenance a movement which savored of the same revolutionary spirit as had produced such terrible atrocities on the other side of the Channel.

In January, 1790, Wilberforce carried a motion for referring to a special committee the farther examination of witnesses. To this work he now daily devoted himself, personally conducting all the examinations. The hurry and flurry of his life at this time it would be difficult to over-estimate. His house became the leading rendezvous of all interested in the cause, and was continually thronged with visitors. His evening hours were devoted to consultations; and it required no little care, sagacity, and forbearance to adjust the claims of so many different agents in the work as he met with. In spite of infirm health his untiring assiduity never for a moment flagged. "Nor are my labors nearly finished," he writes to a friend in October, 1790; "at which you will not wonder, when I tell you that, besides a great folio volume from the Privy Council, I have also scrutinize with much care near 1400 folio pages of evidence delivered before the House of Commons. My eyes

are very indifferent, otherwise pretty well. I am working like a negro." A person who was staying with him about this time writes: "Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Babington have never appeared down-stairs since we came, except to take a hasty dinner, and for half an hour after we have supped. The slave-trade now occupies them nine hours daily. Mr. Babington told me last night that he had 1400 folio pages to read, to detect the contradictions, and to collect the answers which corroborate Mr. W.'s assertions in his speeches; this, with more than 2000 papers to be abridged, must be done in a fortnight. They talk of sitting up one night in each week to accomplish it. The two friends begin to look very ill; but they are in excellent spirits, and at this time I hear them laughing at some absurd questions in the examination, proposed by a friend of Mr. Wilberforce's. You would think Mr. W. much altered since we were at Rayrigg. He is now never riotous or noisy, but very cheerful; sometimes lively, but talks a good deal more on serious subjects than he used to do. Food, beyond what is absolutely necessary for his existence, seems quite given up. He has a very slight breakfast, a plain and sparing dinner, and no more that day except some bread about ten o'clock." Thus unwearily did Wilberforce toil to prepare himself for his motion in favor of abolition, which was proposed on April 12, 1791, in a very eloquent speech, which concluded with an appeal to the religious sympathies of the House: "But on every view it becomes Great Britain to be forward in the work. One-half of this guilty commerce has been conducted by her subjects, and as we have been great in crime let us be early in repentance. There will be a day of retribution wherein we shall have to give account of all the talents, faculties, and opportunities which have been intrusted to us. Let it not then appear that our superior power has been employed to oppress our fellow-creatures, and our superior light to darken the creation of our God." Though supported by Fox and Pitt, Wilberforce's motion was rejected by a large majority.

Though the cause of abolition appeared waning in Parlia-



ment, there were no signs of its decreasing popularity throughout the country, but rather the contrary. In April, 1792, 330 petitions from England and 187 from Scotland were received in its favor by the House of Commons. Upon Wilberforce's moving that in the opinion of the House the slave-trade ought to be abolished, he received the warm support of Pitt, who upon this occasion delivered a speech which is generally regarded as the crowning effort of his eloquence, and which, probably, is the greatest speech delivered during the whole anti-slavery agitation. Its peroration, which has been much admired, runs as follows: "Sir, I trust we shall no longer continue this commerce to the destruction of every improvement on that wide continent, and shall not consider ourselves as conferring too great a boon in restoring its inhabitants to the rank of human beings. I trust we shall not think ourselves too liberal if, by abolishing the slave-trade, we give them the same common chance of civilization with other parts of the world; and that we shall now allow to Africa the opportunity, the hope, the prospect of attaining to the same blessings which we ourselves, through the favorable dispensations of divine Providence, have been permitted at a much more early period to enjoy. If we listen to the voice of reason and duty, and pursue this night the line of conduct which they prescribe, some of us may live to see the reverse of that picture from which we now turn our eyes with shame and regret. We may live to behold the natives of Africa engaged in the calm occupations of industry, in the pursuits of a just and legitimate commerce. We may behold the beams of science and philosophy breaking in upon their land, which, at some happy period in still later times, may blaze with full lustre; and, joining their influence to that of pure religion, may illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense continent. Then may we hope that even Africa, though last of all the quarters of the globe, shall enjoy at length, in the evening of her days, those blessings which have descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also will Europe, participating in her improvement



and prosperity, receive an ample recompense for the tardy kindness, if kindness it can be called, of no longer hindering that continent from extricating herself out of the darkness which in other more fortunate regions has been so much more quickly dispelled." Those members of the Government who were opposed to the abolition felt that they could hardly come forward in opposition to it after their leader had so powerfully pleaded its cause. Accordingly, they resolved on another course of action, which, while having the appearance of favoring the movement, in reality was an insidious and dangerous attack upon it. Dundas, always cool and cautious, brought forward a motion that for the words "*immediate abolition*," "*gradual abolition*" should be substituted. It is the invariable resort of those who wish to postpone a much-needed reform to say, when they see that it is likely to be carried out, that the present is not a suitable time for it; that by far the easiest and most politic plan would be to defer it to a more convenient season. The French Revolution furnished an admirable excuse for proposing delay to the members of the anti-abolition party. Wait, said they, till the political atmosphere be cleared a little. Surely this is not the time to propose a great and radical change, when thrones are being overturned, kings murdered, and governments subverted. If the anti-abolitionists had said directly that they did not wish the slave-trade to be done away with, they would have found few to support them; but, arguing as they did, with the great horror of the French Revolution which pervaded the higher classes of England, they secured a very considerable following. Dundas's motion was carried by a large majority. A few days afterward the House passed a resolution for abolishing the trade in 1796. When, however, the matter came before the House of Lords, a resolution to hear farther evidence was adopted, in spite of the utmost efforts of the abolitionists, and thus Wilberforce had the mortification to find that, in spite of his efforts, no real progress had been made.

In his speech during this debate Wilberforce had charged a West Indian captain, named Kimber, with great cruelty in his

conduct of the trade. Kimber was described by Sir James Stonehouse, to whom Wilberforce applied for information, as "a very bad man, a great spendthrift, one who would swear to any falsehood, and who is linked with a set of rascals like himself." In consequence of Wilberforce's speech he was indicted on a charge of murder, but "through the shameful remissness of the Crown lawyers, and the indecent behavior of a high personage, who from the Bench identified himself with the prisoner's cause," he was acquitted. As soon as he was discharged from prison he applied to Wilberforce for reparation of his wrongs, modestly demanding "a public apology, £5000 in money, and such a place under Government as would make me comfortable." On a brief refusal being sent him he annoyed Wilberforce for two years with threats of personal violence, keeping him in such fear that during one of his journeys to Yorkshire it was thought needful that he should be accompanied by an armed companion. The interference of Lord Sheffield, "an honorable opponent," at length put an end to Kimber's threats.

To go minutely into the history of the various motions for abolition made by Wilberforce would be tedious. A mere mention of most of them will suffice. In 1793 the House refused to confirm its vote of the previous year in favor of gradual abolition. In 1795, and each of the four following years, the motion for abolition was made and lost. "There were enough at the Opera to have carried it," said Wilberforce bitterly, in 1796, when the bill, on a third reading, was thrown out by a majority of four. The abolitionists now saw that it would be wise to wait for better days. "And thus," it has been said, "a measure calculated to wipe off in part a foul disgrace from the nation—a measure supported by men of all parties and of all sects—a measure openly and encouragingly advocated, not only by all the men of highest talent in the country, but by the minister of the day himself, was defeated, after a struggle which, at the time, was aptly called the War of the Pigmies against the Giants. Of the sincerity of the other great pro-

motors of the scheme no doubt has been expressed ; but on Mr. Pitt's sincerity there have been thrown very grave suspicions, which it is not possible entirely to dispel. For, although the charge of absolute duplicity is sufficiently rebutted, both by his unbending character and by his admirable speeches on the question, it is unaccountable how he, the most peremptory of all rulers, should not, if he pleased, have forced to silence those subalterns who trembled to oppose him in any plan but this. The proud son of Chatham loved truth and justice not a little, but he loved power and place greatly more ; and he was resolved that negro emancipation should not lose him a shred either of political influence or a beam of royal favor." All may by no means be disposed to agree with the estimate of Pitt implied in the last sentence of the foregoing extract ; but it can scarcely be doubted, that if he had brought a little more pressure to bear upon his colleagues and underlings in office, slave-trade abolition might have been carried much sooner than it was.

We must now turn for a little while to Wilberforce's personal history. In 1797 he published his work entitled "Practical Christianity." The main design of the book is to show the difference between the Christianity of the New Testament and that which was current in fashionable society. Considerable fears were entertained as to how the work would be received, and an edition of 500 copies was all the publisher thought it would be safe to venture on. The result showed that he had greatly miscalculated in estimating its probable success. Within a few days the first edition was out of print, and within half a year 7500 copies had been sold. Twenty editions of it were sold before the copyright had expired. No doubt (though the intrinsic merits of the work are far from inconsiderable), Wilberforce's prominent position and his large acquaintanceship among fashionable society had much to do with its success. Many were the encomiums pronounced upon it. Bishop Porteous wrote that he was truly thankful to Providence that a work of its importance should have made its

appearance at such a tremendous moment. John Newton deemed it the most valuable and important publication of the age. "I sincerely hope," wrote Lord Chancellor Loughborough, "that your book will be read by many with that just and proper temper which the awful circumstances in which we stand ought to produce." We can form a better estimate of Loughborough's character in our day than Wilberforce could have done; and to find a man of such a character praising such a book produces a far from agreeable effect upon the reader. A good account of the general reception of Wilberforce's work is given in a letter of Henry Thornton to Zachary Macaulay. "I send you herewith," he writes, "the book on religion lately published by Mr. Wilberforce. It excites even more attention than you would have supposed among all the graver and better-disposed people. The bishops in general much approve of it, though some more warmly, some more coldly. Many of his gay and political friends admire and approve of it, though some do but dip into it. Many have recognized the likeness of themselves. The better part of the religious world, and more especially the Church of England, prize it most highly, and consider it as producing an era in the history of the Church. The Dissenters, many of them, call it legal, and cavil at particular parts. Gilbert Wakefield has already scribbled something against it. I myself am among those who contemplate it as a most important work." Probably none of the praises his book received were nearly so gratifying to the author as to learn that Burke spent the last two days of his life in its perusal, deriving much benefit from it, and charging Dr. Lawrence to express his thanks to Wilberforce for having given such a book to the world.

The year 1797 was a notable one in Wilberforce's life for another reason besides the publication of his book. "I doubt," he wrote to a friend in the end of 1796, "if I shall ever change my situation: the state of public affairs concurs with other causes in making me believe 'I must finish my journey alone.' I much differ from you in thinking that a man such as I am



has no reason to apprehend some violent death or other. I do assure you that in my own case I think it highly probable. Then consider how extremely I am occupied. What should I have done, had I been a family man, for the last three weeks, worried from morning to night? But I must not think of such matters now; it makes me feel my solitary state too sensibly. Yet this state has some advantages: it makes me *feel* I am not at home, and impresses on me the duty of looking for and hastening unto a better country." Like so many who have gravely avowed their intention of remaining single, Wilberforce soon saw reason to change his mind. On the 30th of May, 1797, he was married to Barbara Anne Spooner, daughter of a Warwickshire gentleman. It gives one a striking idea of the panic which prevailed through the country about the disasters sustained by the British arms at this time in the war with France, to learn that it was remarked by those who knew Wilberforce best, as a striking instance of his confidence in Providence, that at such a time of general apprehension he should have resolved to marry. In his domestic life after his marriage Wilberforce was very happy, he and his wife being united together by a happy congeniality in all their tastes and interests. While his children were infants he was so incessantly harassed by business that he rarely saw them, which caused the ingenuous remark of their nurse, when one of them was unwilling to go to him, "They were always afraid of strangers." As they grew older, however, and Wilberforce's public engagements grew less imperative, he was their constant companion, acting as their playmate as well as their instructor.

We may pass over the few years following Wilberforce's marriage as containing little of permanent interest. In 1804 the hopes of the abolitionists, which for a time had been sorely cast down, began to revive. In that year Wilberforce's motion was carried by a majority of seventy-five on the first reading of his bill. The third reading was carried by a majority of sixty-six. On the second reading of the bill in the House of



Lords it was adjourned, without a division, to the following session. In 1805, greatly to Wilberforce's vexation, the abolition bill was thrown out, on its second reading, by a majority of seven. "I never felt so much on any Parliamentary occasion," he wrote in his diary. "I could not sleep after first waking at night. The poor blacks rushed into my mind, and the guilt of our wicked land." To his friend Lord Muncaster he says in a letter: "Alas! my dear Muncaster, from the fatal moment of our defeat on Thursday evening I have had a damp struck into my heart. I could not sleep either on Thursday or Friday night without dreaming of scenes of depredation and cruelty on the injured shores of Africa, and by a fatal connection diffusing the baneful effects through the interior of that vast continent. I really have had no spirits to write to you. Alas! my friend, in what a world do we live!" In course of the year an event took place which in part consoled Wilberforce for his disappointment. A measure of Pitt's for abolishing, by an Order in Council, the slave-trade in the newly-conquered colonies which had no charters was carried into effect, with no resistance whatever.

In the beginning of 1806 Pitt died, prematurely struck down by the disastrous events of the French war. Wilberforce felt his death deeply; for though he had often differed from him, a sincere and cordial friendship had been maintained between them for many years, with only slight and casual periods of estrangement. On the formation of the Ministry of Fox and Grenville a measure was proposed and carried to give effect to the proclamation of the preceding year, by which British merchants were forbidden to import slaves into colonies conquered by the British armies in the course of the war. Resolutions declaring the slave-trade to be contrary to the principles of justice, humanity, and sound policy, and that the House would, "with all practicable expediency," proceed to abolish it, were carried by large majorities. As some measure was required to prevent the sudden increase of the slave-trade from the passing of a resolution hostile to it, a bill was passed rapidly through

the House to prevent the employment in the trade of any fresh ships. During the discussion both Lord Grenville and Fox declared that they felt the question of the slave-trade to be one involving the dearest interests of humanity, and the most urgent claims of policy, justice, and religion; and that should they succeed in effecting its abolition, they would regard that success as entailing more true glory on their administration, and greater honor and advantage on their country, than any other measure in which they could be engaged. Fox, moreover, declared that though he had sat in the House between thirty and forty years, if he had done nothing else during that time but assisted to carry a measure for slave-trade abolition, he should think his life well spent, and should retire satisfied that he had not lived in vain. During his last illness he was heard to express a wish that "he might go down to the House once more to say something on the slave-trade."

In March, 1807, the cause for which Wilberforce and his associates had so long striven was at last triumphant. Lord Grenville, in the House of Lords, and Lord Howick (afterward Earl Grey), in the House of Commons, introduced and carried through a bill for slave-trade abolition, which had at last been adopted as a government measure. Of the many eloquent tributes paid to Wilberforce during the debates, none was finer than that of Sir Samuel Romilly, who entreated the young members of Parliament to let that day's event be a lesson to them how much the rewards of virtue exceed those of ambition; and then contrasted the feelings of Napoleon in all his greatness with those of that honorable individual who would that night lay his head upon the pillow and remember that the slave-trade was no more. The House welcomed the allusion with enthusiasm, and such shouts of applause burst forth as have rarely been heard in Parliament. After the House broke up many of his friends crowded eagerly round Wilberforce to congratulate him. "What shall we abolish next?" he playfully asked his friend Henry Thornton. The division had been 283 to 16. "Let us make out the names of

those sixteen miscreants; I have four of them," said William Smith. "Never mind the miserable sixteen, think of the glorious two hundred and eighty-three," generously replied Wilberforce. Of the many letters of congratulation he received, none was more eloquent or more true than that from Sir James Mackintosh, then in India. "To speak," he wrote, "of fame and glory to Mr. Wilberforce, would be to use a language far beneath him; but he will surely consider the effect of his triumph on the fruitfulness of his example. Who knows whether the greater part of the benefit that he has conferred on the world (the greatest that any individual has had the means of conferring) may not be the encouraging example that the exertion of virtue may be crowned by such splendid success? We are apt petulantly to express our wonder that so much exertion should be necessary to suppress such flagrant injustice. The more just reflection will be, that a short period of the short life of one man is, well and wisely directed, sufficient to remedy the misery of millions for ages. Benevolence has hitherto been too often disheartened by frequent failures; hundreds and thousands will be animated by Mr. Wilberforce's example, by his success, and (let me use the word only in the moral sense of preserving his example) by a renown that can only perish with the world, to attack all the forms of corruption and cruelty that scourge mankind. Oh, what twenty years in the life of one man these were which abolished the slave-trade! How precious is time! How valuable and dignified is human life, which in general appears so base and miserable! How noble and sacred is human nature, made capable of achieving such truly great exploits!"

In the midst of Wilberforce's triumph he was called on to wage the greatest Parliamentary contest of his life—in some respects the greatest which English history records. In that year he fought and won what was, perhaps, the costliest contest ever fought in England, when he carried Yorkshire against the Fitzwilliam and Harewood interests, supported by the independent party and the Dissenters. The poll, according to

the ordinary practice of that time, was kept open for fifteen days, and, long before that time was over, not a vehicle of any sort was to be hired in the county. Lord Harewood, whose son, Henry Lascelles, was one of the candidates, avowed himself ready to spend on it his whole Barbadoes property; while the house of Wentworth, a scion of which, Lord Milton, was the Whig candidate, was no less threatening in its preparations. "After all," said the Duke of Norfolk, who was a warm partisan of Lord Milton, "what greater enjoyment can there be in life than to stand a contested election for Yorkshire, and to win it by one?" The expenses of these two candidates for bringing voters to the poll alone amounted to £100,000 each. As Wilberforce was comparatively a poor man, nearly £70,000 was enthusiastically raised in a few days by public subscription to defray his expenses. From the first it was evident that he was the popular favorite, and in the end he was elected by the large majority of 631. His expenses amounted to only about £30,000, while the contest is said to have cost his opponents nearly half a million. "Never," said Wilberforce, "shall I forget the spontaneous zeal with which numbers of all ranks came forward, subjecting themselves often to great trouble and fatigue, coming from considerable distances at their own expense, with other gratifying marks of attachment and esteem." An instance or two, illustrative of the popular enthusiasm in his cause, may be given. A freeholder presented himself to vote whose appearance was such as to imply that the cost of his journey must have been no small matter to him. The committee, therefore, proposed to him that they should pay his expenses. This he at once declined. When, however, it appeared that he was a clergyman of very small means, who had travelled, often on foot, from the farthest corner of the county, they renewed their suggestion, and named a certain sum which they pressed him to accept. "Well, gentlemen," said he, "I will accept your offer, and I request you to add that sum in my name to the subscriptions for Mr. Wilberforce's expenses." "How did you come up?" was the question the committee



asked an honest countryman who had given Wilberforce a plumper, and denied that his journey had cost him anything. "Sure enow I cam' all the way ahint Lord Milton's carriage," was the reply. One can fancy the shrewd Yorkshire grin that overspread his countenance as he uttered it.

Here we may glance for a little at Wilberforce's private character. One of its most striking features was his unostentatious and unbounded benevolence. In one year alone he gave away the sum of £3173 in charity, and there is reason to believe that it was his usual practice to spend one-fourth of his income in the same way. "I never intended to do more," he told his eldest son, "than not exceed my income, Providence having placed me in a situation in which my charities of various kinds were necessarily large. But, believe me, there is a special blessing in being liberal to the poor, and on the family of those who have been so; and I doubt not my children will fare better even in this world, for real happiness, than if I had been saving £20,000 or £30,000 of what has been given away." In society Wilberforce was one of the most amiable and delightful of men. In his youth he had been an admirable mimic, and would often set the table in a roar by his perfect imitation of Lord North. From this dangerous talent he was reclaimed by his honored friend Lord Camden, who, when invited by one of Wilberforce's friends to witness his powers of imitation, at once refused, saying slightly, in order that Wilberforce might hear it, "It is but a vulgar accomplishment." To the last Wilberforce continued full of vivacity, and playfulness, and humor. Madame de Staël pronounced him the wittiest man in England. Sir James Stephen, who had opportunities of knowing him well, compares his vivacity to Voltaire's. Sir James Mackintosh, who visited him when advanced in life, wrote of him: "Do you remember Madame de Maintenon's exclamation, '*Oh, the misery of having to amuse an old King, qui n'est pas amusable!*' Now, if I were called on to describe Wilberforce in one word, I should say he was the most '*amusable*' man I ever met with in my life. Instead of having to



think what subjects will interest him, it is perfectly impossible to hit on one that does not. I never saw any one who touched life at so many points; and this is the more remarkable in a man who is supposed to live absorbed in the contemplation of a future state. When he was in the House of Commons he seemed to have the freshest mind of any man there. There was all the charm of youth about him. And he is quite as remarkable in this bright evening of his days as when I saw him in his glory many years ago."

A pleasing feature of Wilberforce's character is the fresh and lively interest he took in literature to the last. In his old age, when he could read little continuously, he would pick out the pith of books by a rapid glancing over their pages, and in every house he visited he took care to ascertain within a day or two the amount of its literary stores. What principally vexed him about his feeble eyesight was, that it prevented him from maintaining an accurate acquaintance with the great writers of antiquity. Some of the remarks on books recorded in his diary and letters are far from bad. "Have you read the '*Lady of the Lake*?' " he writes to Muncaster. "Like a good economist, I waited till it should come out in octavo; but had I but tasted it before, though it had been folio instead of quarto, I could not without extreme difficulty have resisted the impulse of gratifying my appetite for it without stint. Really, I did not think that I continued in such a degree subject to the fascination of poetry. I have been absolutely bewitched. I could not keep the imaginary persons out of my head when I most wished to remove them. How wonderful is this dominion over the heart which genius exercises! There are some parts of the poem which are quite inimitable—all that precedes and follows '*And, Saxon, I am Roderick Dhu!*' " "Hearing '*Old Mortality*' after dinner," he notes in his diary, "it has made me sit up too late, and interested me too deeply. *Oi moi!* Scott is certainly a distinct exhibitor of human character and affections. But I hope his delineation of the Cameronians is too dark, and more especially his making them scruple at no

means when the end is good." His general verdict on the Waverley series was, "Scott's novels useful as the works of a master in general nature, and illustrative of the realities of past life."

The few years following Wilberforce's election for Yorkshire present little that need detain us. In the beginning of 1811, on Sir Samuel Romilly saying something in disparagement of Pitt, Wilberforce defended his old friend's memory in words the chivalrous spirit of which it is impossible not to admire. "If," said he, "my honorable and learned friend had enjoyed the opportunities of knowing that great man which have fallen to my lot, he would have been better enabled to do justice to his character. I am no worshipper of Mr. Pitt. I differed from him—with what pain none but myself can tell; but if I know anything I am sure of this, that every other consideration was absorbed in one grand ruling passion—the love of his country." Finding that the infirmities of age were coming on him, Wilberforce toward the end of the year began to think of retiring from the representation of Yorkshire, feeling that one of his declining powers was not a suitable member for so large and influential a constituency. For a time he was in doubt whether to retire from Parliament altogether or to seek election in some small constituency. The latter course was the one he finally fixed on. "It is best," he said, "to quit the large sphere and yet remain at least for a while in Parliament, at the beginning of a new reign, when one knows not what may be intended in favor of Popery or against morals." His decision to retire, which was publicly announced in 1812, was much lamented by his Yorkshire friends. At a meeting of "the gentlemen, clergy, and freeholders of the county of York," it was unanimously resolved to return thanks to Wilberforce for his services during more than twenty-eight years as their representative in Parliament; for his unremitting and impartial attention to the private business of the county; and for his independent and honest performance of his trust upon every public occasion. In the same year he was appointed member for

the pocket-borough of Bramber. For this place he sat for twelve years, busily employing himself as before with Parliamentary business, and with plans for securing that the provisions of the Slave-trade Abolition Act should be fully carried out. Reviewing his life at the close of the year 1821, he wrote: "My days appear few when I look back, but they have been anything but evil. My blessings have been of every kind and of long continuance; general to me and to other Englishmen, but still more peculiar from my having a kindly natural temper, a plentiful fortune: all the mercies of my public life. . . . Then by being made the instrument of bringing forward the abolition; my helping powerfully the cause of Christianity in India; my never having been discredited, but always supported, on all public occasions." He then goes on to enumerate the various other blessings which had surrounded his lot, the whole statement admirably illustrating his genial and contented temperament.

During the years that passed between 1807 and 1823 the efforts of the abolitionists had been mainly directed to garnering up the fruits of their victory. They had now the satisfaction of knowing that the slave-trade had been abolished by the United States, by Venezuela, Chili, and Buenos Ayres, by Sweden and Denmark, and by Holland and France. Spain and Portugal had after many efforts been induced to promise gradual abolition. The thoughts of the abolition party in Parliament (now a large and influential body, numbering among its members Wilberforce, Mackintosh, Buxton, Lushington, William Smith, and last, though by no means least, Brougham, of whose anti-slavery services some notice will be found farther on\*) were now turned to the subject of slavery itself, and to the best means for doing away with it. In 1823 Wilberforce opened the question in the House of Commons, by presenting a petition from the Quakers against slavery. In the previous year he had given some notice of his views by saying, "Not I

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\* See chapter on "Popular Education. Lord Brougham."

only, but all the chief advocates of the abolition, declared from the first that our object was, by ameliorating regulations, and by stopping the influx of uninstructed savages, to advance slowly toward the period when these unhappy beings might exchange their degraded state of slavery for that of a free and industrious peasantry. To that most interesting object I still look forward, though perhaps of late we have all been chargeable with not paying due attention to the subject." Before his death Wilberforce was destined to see his aspirations in great measure realized.

In 1824 he delivered his last speech in Parliament. It was an earnest protest against leaving the question of slavery to be dealt with by the Colonial legislatures. "The West Indians," he said, "abhor alike the end we have in view, and the means by which we hope to reach it. They frankly avow that from the emancipation of their slaves they look for inevitable ruin; while all their prejudices are revolted by our remedial measures. If they agreed with us as to our grand object, we might hope to lessen by degrees their aversion to our several steps; or, were these measures singly acceptable to them, we might hope gradually and almost insensibly to lead them to our end. But what can we hope when they abhor alike both means and end? It is with reluctance and pain I come forward, but I esteem it my bounden duty to protest against the policy on which we are now acting. '*Liberavi animum meum.*' May it please God to disappoint my expectations, and to render the result more favorable than I anticipate!"

In 1825 Wilberforce finally retired from public life, having previously appointed Thomas Fowell Buxton his heir in the anti-slavery crusade. Apart from the great work of his life, Wilberforce's Parliamentary career was not unimportant. He was a supporter of Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform; he strongly opposed the encouragement given to gambling by state lotteries; he was one of the earliest advocates of the poor chimney-sweep boys, then so cruelly treated; he zealously supported the cause of the Indian missionaries in



opposition to those who represented the employment of missionaries as inconsistent with the safety of the Empire. In an age renowned for the eloquence of its speakers he occupied an honored place, standing, "if not first, in the very first line." Sir Samuel Romilly esteemed him the most efficient speaker in the House of Commons. Pitt used to say repeatedly that, of all the men he had ever known, Wilberforce had the greatest natural eloquence. Lord Brougham pronounces his eloquence of the highest order.\* It was, he says, persuasive and pathetic in an eminent degree; but it was occasionally bold and impassioned, animated with the inspiration which deep feeling alone can breathe into spoken thought, chastened by a pure taste, varied by extensive information, enriched by classical allusion, and sometimes elevated by the more sublime topics of Holy Writ. His great natural powers of sarcasm he, from conscientious motives, refrained from using; only once, indeed, in his public life is he known to have retorted with bitterness. This was when (with, to say the least of it, execrably bad taste) a certain member spoke of him as the "honorable and religious gentleman;" on which occasion Wilberforce poured on him a flood of sarcasm which was not soon forgotten. On some one remarking to Sir Samuel Romilly that on this occasion Wilberforce had greatly surpassed Pitt himself, "Yes," Romilly replied, "it is the most striking thing I almost ever heard; but I look upon it as a more singular proof of Wilberforce's virtue than of his genius, for who but he ever was possessed of such a formidable weapon and never used it?"

Of the admirable patience and fortitude with which, during his long and laborious life, Wilberforce fought against the slave-trade and slavery, it is hardly necessary to speak. "He is," wrote Sir James Mackintosh, in 1806, "the very model of a reformer: ardent without turbulence, mild without timidity or coolness; neither yielding to difficulties, nor disturbed or exasperated by them; patient and meek, yet intrepid; persisting

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\* "Statesmen of the Time of George III."



for twenty years through good report and through evil report; just and charitable even to his most malignant enemies; unwearied in every experiment to disarm the prejudices of his more rational and disinterested opponents, and supporting the zeal without dangerously exciting the passions of his opponents." "He it was," says a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* for July, 1808, "who for twenty long years watched day and night over the sacred flame which his eloquence had kindled and cherished, and kept it alive when, chilled by an atmosphere of false policy, and blown upon by the breath of corruption, it sickened and almost ceased to glow; nay, when the broader glare of other fires drew away from it the eyes of all men, he kept it steadily in view, and sent it forth at last to consume the scourges and fetters of oppression, and to purify and enlighten a benighted world. Mr. Wilberforce indubitably has been the great captain of the abolitionists; and without his courage and skill and unwearied perseverance their cause must long since have been lost and abandoned."

The few and trifling faults of Wilberforce as an orator and a man are scarcely worth mentioning. The extraordinary discursiveness and versatility of his mind made him sometimes attempt to keep too many irons in the fire—to shift too rapidly from one subject to another—and occasionally gave an appearance of inconsistency to his conduct. In the article in the *Quarterly Review* previously referred to we read that in his old age "he was generally heard with more attention than it now appears his own *modest vanity* supposed—but it was an attention arising chiefly from curiosity to know which way he would finally vote; and this curiosity he would sometimes—quite unconsciously, we believe—protract by a balanced and seesaw argumentation which afforded no clew whatsoever to the conclusion at which he was ultimately to arrive, and which it was sometimes evident he did not know himself. This kind of inconsistent rambling so grew upon him that it used to be said that, as soon as one could discover which way his arguments leaned, there was no longer any difficulty in anticipating that

his vote would be on the *other* side; and we remember its being once drolly stated that Wilberforce was always of the opinion of the *last* speaker—*except* when he happened to speak last himself. . . . Another drawback on the Parliamentary efficiency of his latter years was his habit of *taking notes*, which so entirely absorbed his attention that he often lost the real substance of the debate; and while his hat was full, and his coat-pockets stuffed out like panniers with copious memoranda of every word that had been uttered, he never knew what any one had said." Though Mr. Croker in this extract characteristically puts his statements in the most offensive manner possible, it appears from other sources that they are substantially correct.

On his retirement from Parliament, Wilberforce withdrew into the bosom of his family, there to pass the calm and peaceful evening of his days. His last years were checkered by the loss of a large part of his fortune. His eldest son had entered upon a speculation in a milk company which proved a failure, and Wilberforce, who had become guarantee for him, had to pay a very large sum—between £40,000 and £50,000, it is stated. Such a disaster, however, in no serious degree troubled him. He had never cared for money except as a means to do good with, and he bore the calamity with unclouded serenity. A great triumph gladdened the closing days of his life. The last public information he received was, that the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery had been read for the second time in the House of Commons. "Thank God," said he, "that I should have lived to witness a day in which England is willing to give twenty millions sterling for the abolition of slavery!" During his closing illness his sunny cheerfulness never deserted him for a moment. Talking of his being kept from exercise, he said, "What cause for thankfulness have I, that I am not lying in pain, and in a suffering posture, as so many people are! Certainly it is a great privation to me, from my habits, not to be able to walk about, and to lie still as much as I do; but then how many there are who are lying in severe pain!" On July

29th, 1833, he expired, aged seventy-three years and eleven months.

Wilberforce had desired to be buried beside his sister and his daughter in a vault at Stoke Newington; but it was felt that such a man should lie amid the honored dead of England in Westminster Abbey, and a requisition to that effect was addressed to his relatives by many of the most distinguished men of both parties. There, accordingly, he was laid, in the north transept, close to the graves of Pitt, Fox, and Canning. No one of more noble and gentler nature lies buried there; no one of whom we think with more kindly and loving feelings.



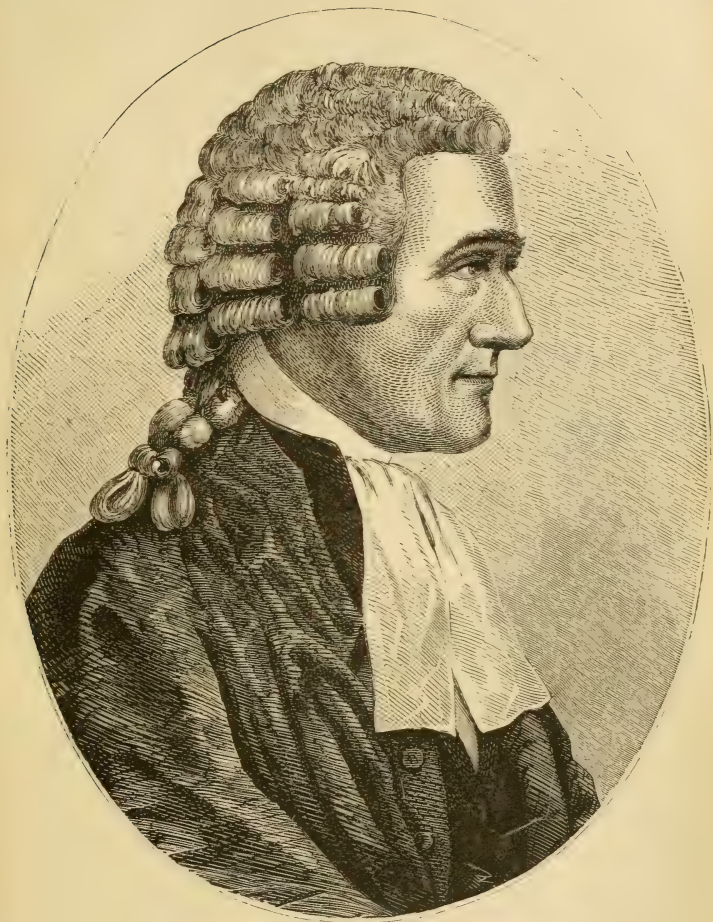


## THE AMELIORATION OF THE CRIMINAL CODE.

*SIR SAMUEL ROMILLY.*

THE life of a great lawyer does not in general possess much popular interest. True, the story of his early struggles with the difficulties of fortune, and of the slow and gradual steps by which he ascended the ladder of fame, is in many cases not unattractive; but when once he is fairly on the high-road to prosperity the interest is apt to fade away. The Law is proverbially a jealous mistress; and, though there are more exceptions to the rule than is popularly supposed, it is too often the case that a great lawyer is a great lawyer only, and not a great man—that his whole thoughts and energies and reading have been confined to his profession alone, and that the general and harmonious culture of his whole nature has been neglected. It is probably owing to this cause that it so rarely happens that a legal celebrity is a popular hero; and that the names of the forensic luminaries which are mentioned with the greatest respect within the charmed circle of the profession are all but unknown to the world at large. To both of these rules Sir Samuel Romilly forms an exception. The interest of his life does not stop when the record of his early labors is finished; indeed, it increases to the end; and, besides having the reputation of a profound lawyer among his legal brethren, he was, in his lifetime, honored and admired by the people. Nor has his reputation altogether faded away. There are few who have not heard something of “the good Sir Samuel Romilly,” and of the distinguished part he acted in the reform of our Criminal Law.

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SIR SAMUEL ROMILLY.



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The "Memoirs" of Romilly, published by his sons, interesting as they are, are not so complete nor, in several parts of his life, so copious as could have been desired. They comprise a narrative by himself of his birth, parentage, education, and life to 1789—a delightful specimen of a delightful class of literature—a series of letters to friends, and the diary of his Parliamentary career from 1806 to 1818, from which mainly is drawn our information, often vexatiously meagre and incomplete, of his labors in the amelioration of the Criminal Code. His work in this field may be compared to that of Howard in prison reform. Both had in view the welfare of a degraded, and miserable, and sin-stained class of the community. Both had to fight against traditionalism and prejudice. Both, but particularly Romilly, have earned the gratitude of posterity, not so much by what they themselves actually accomplished—though that was far from inconsiderable—as by the impetus their enthusiasm gave to other workers.

Among the many French Protestants whom the revocation of the Edict of Nantes compelled to abandon their native soil and to seek a home and freedom in England, was the grandfather of our hero. Having only his own exertions to support himself, he embarked in trade. He educated his sons to useful trades; and was content, at his death, to leave them, instead of his original patrimony, no other inheritance than the habits of industry he had given them, the example of his own virtuous life, an hereditary detestation of tyranny and injustice, and an ardent zeal in the cause of civil and religious liberty. Of his sons the youngest became eminent as a jeweller, and married Miss Gurnault, by whom he had a numerous family, of which the youngest—with whom we have to deal—was born March 1, 1757.

Though Romilly's father had a very extensive business, yielding a gross return of over £20,000 per annum, his profits do not appear to have been large, and he brought up his children in a very unostentatious style. He was a man of spotless integrity, fond of talking about the pleasure of doing good, and

the rewards which virtue finds in itself; which doctrine, says his son, came from his lips not as a dry and illusive precept, but as a heartfelt truth, and as the fruit of the happiest experience. He was, besides, possessed of considerable culture, fond of reading, and an admirer of the fine arts, to gratify his taste for which, as pictures were too costly for his purchase, he limited himself to prints, of which, before the end of his life, he had formed a very large and valuable collection. The weak state of the health of his wife prevented her from paying any attention to her children, and they were brought up principally by a kind female relation, who taught them to read out of the Scriptures, the *Spectator*, and an English translation of "Telemachus." When she fell ill, which happened frequently, the care of the children devolved upon a female servant of the name of Mary Evans—ill-qualified, writes Romilly, "to give us instruction or to cultivate our understandings; but whose tender and affectionate nature, whose sensibility at the sufferings of others, and earnest desire to relieve them to the utmost of her little means, could hardly fail to improve the hearts of those who were under her care." Unfortunately, she had a propensity to tell stories of devils, witches, and apparitions, which, upon a child of sensitive and high-strung nature like Romilly, produced very lamentable results. The bad impression left on him by his nurse's stories was enhanced by the prints he found in the lives of martyrs and the "Newgate Calendar," which cost him many a sleepless night. His dreams, too, were disturbed by the hideous images which haunted his imagination by day. He thought himself present at executions, murders, and scenes of blood; and often lay in bed agitated by his terrors, equally afraid of remaining awake in the dark and of falling asleep to encounter the horrors of his dreams. Nor were these the only torments that assailed his childish years. He was impressed with a constant terror of death, and specially of his father's death, and never looked on his countenance—on which care and affliction had deeply imprinted premature marks of old age—without reflecting that

he could not have many years to live. Once he accompanied him to the theatre on a night when Garrick acted. The play was "Zara," and the farce was "Lethe." "The inimitable and various powers of acting," he says, "which were displayed by the admirable performer in both these pieces could not for a moment drive from my mind the dismal idea which haunted me. In the aged Lusignan I saw what my father in a few years would be, tottering upon the brink of the grave; and when in the farce the old man desires to drink the waters of Lethe, that he may forget how old he is, I thought that the same idea must necessarily present itself to my father; that he must see as clearly as I did that his death could not be at the distance of many years; and that, notwithstanding his apparent cheerfulness, that idea must often prey upon his mind, and poison his happiness more even than it did mine. I looked at his countenance as he was sitting by me, persuaded myself that I observed a change in his features, conjectured that the same painful reflections had occurred to him as had to me, repented of having entered the theatre, and returned from it as sad and as dejected as I could have done from a funeral." Probably there are not a few who can recall having been haunted in their childhood by similar terrors and apprehensions to those Romilly experienced.

Romilly's early education was not particularly well attended to. When very young he and his brother were sent to a school taught by an ignorant, brutal, and severe master; from the effect of which bad qualities they, however, escaped, owing to the fact that he deemed them of more aristocratic birth than most of his pupils. At this seminary Romilly remained for several years, the only acquisitions he made at it being writing, arithmetic, and the rules of French grammar. To render the language of the country of their ancestors familiar to his children, it was the practice of Romilly's father to cause French to be spoken in the family on Sunday mornings, and to enforce the attendance of his children once every Sunday at one of the French chapels which had been established when

the Protestant refugees first emigrated into England. Romilly was destined by his father for the profession of the law; unfortunately, however, the only attorney with whom he was acquainted was by no means such, either in appearance or manner, as to give him a high opinion of that line of life. He was a shortish, fat man, with a ruddy countenance which always shone as if besmeared with grease; a large wig which sat loose from his head; his eyes constantly half-shut and drowsy; all his motions slow and deliberate; and his words slobbered out as if he had not force enough to articulate. His dark and gloomy house was filled with dusty papers and voluminous parchment deeds; and in his meagre library Romilly did not see a single volume which he would not have been deterred by its external appearance from opening. The idea of a lawyer and of this individual became so identified in his mind, that he looked on the profession with disgust; and, all thoughts of his becoming an attorney being given up, it was determined that, after suitable preparation, he should be inducted into the great commercial house of Sir Samuel Fludyer & Company, the principal partners of which were family connections on his father's side. To qualify him for his new calling, "it was resolved," he writes, "that I should learn the art or science (I know not which it should be called) of keeping merchants' accounts. A master was provided for me. I was equipped with a set of journals, waste-books, bill-books, ledgers, and I know not what; and I passed some weeks in making careful entries of ideal transactions, keeping a register of the time when fictitious bills of exchange would become due, and posting up imaginary accounts." He would have lost more time than he did in this ridiculous employment had not his tutor suddenly decamped to avoid his creditors; and events soon followed which made it unnecessary to look out for a new instructor. Both the Fludyers died; and with their death the hope of Romilly's commercial eminence departed. The apparent misfortune was a blessing in disguise. Nobler destinies awaited him than to become a mere accumulator of wealth.



For some time after the downfall of his commercial hopes Romilly remained at home without any certain destination. He was then employed in his father's business, where he found his duties so light as to leave him with a very considerable proportion of leisure. This leisure he employed to the best advantage. He read extensively, and, as is the case with most youths who are fond of reading, he wrote extensively. His eclogues, songs, and satires, his translations of Boileau, his imitations of Spenser, were received with such applause, that he soon became persuaded of what was, indeed, quite the case—"that he possessed no inconsiderable share of genius." Lamenting that his education had not been more liberal, he came to the sensible conclusion that it was not yet too late to make up its deficiencies. Accordingly, when between his fifteenth and sixteenth year, he applied himself to the study of Latin with such ardor, that in three or four years he had read every writer of the age of pure Latinity, except those treating of technical subjects merely, such as Varro, Columella, and Celsus. He had thrice perused the whole of Livy, Sallust, Tacitus; all Cicero, with very inconsiderable exceptions; besides going through Cæsar, Terence, Ovid, Virgil, Horace, and Juvenal again and again. A bold attempt to learn Greek was not so successful, and after mature consideration he renounced the hope of ever reading the Greek authors in the original. To make up, in part at least, for this deficiency, he went through the principal Greek writers in the Latin versions which generally accompanied the original text. So insatiable was his thirst for knowledge that, in addition to those labors, he attended several courses of lectures on natural philosophy given by Martin, Ferguson, and Walker; as well as those on painting, architecture, and anatomy, at the Royal Academy. While he was thus employed, an event took place which altered his prospects. A relation of his mother's died, and left to the Romilly family very considerable legacies. The share that fell to Samuel amounted to about £3000. "Blessed be his memory for it," he says, in the fragment of autobiography written in his forty-sixth year.

“But for this legacy the portion of my life which is already past must have been spent in a manner the most irksome and painful, and my present condition would probably have been wretched and desperate. I should have engaged in business; I should probably have failed of success in it; and I should at this moment have been without fortune, without credit, and without the means of acquiring either; and, what would have been most painful to me, my nearest relatives would have been without resources.”

The more Romilly became interested in literary pursuits the greater became his dislike to his father's business. After due consideration it was determined that he should enter into some department of the law; and at the age of sixteen he was articulated for a period of five years to William Michael Lally, one of the six clerks in Chancery. The prejudice Romilly had contracted in his boyhood against the legal profession was destined speedily to wear off under the influence of Mr. Lally. He was a man of strong natural understanding, of the purest integrity, of great general reading, and much knowledge of the world. At this period of his life Romilly's ambition was to follow his profession just as far as was necessary for his subsistence, and to aspire to fame by his literary pursuits. Accordingly, he began to exercise himself in prose composition, and, judging translation to be the most useful exercise for forming a style, he rendered into English the finest models of writing that the Latin language afforded. With the same view of improving his style he read and studied the best English writers—Addison, Swift, Bolingbroke, Robertson, and Hume—noting down every peculiar propriety and happiness of expression which he met with, and which he was conscious he would not have used himself. Romilly's method of improving himself in English composition bears a very close resemblance to that adopted by Buckle, the historian.

The principal cause of Romilly's abandoning his dream of literary ambition, and turning his thoughts to the higher walks of the legal profession, was his intimacy with his friend Roget.

Roget, who afterward married Romilly's sister, was a native of Geneva, who had been appointed minister of the French chapel the Romillys attended. He was a man of very considerable abilities and attainments, and appears to have exercised much influence over Romilly. By his advice, against the opinion of Mr. Lally, who thought his diffidence would be a fatal obstacle to his success, Romilly, at the age of twenty-two, became the pupil of Mr. Spranger, a Chancery draughtsman. Another reason, under Roget's advice, influenced him in taking this step. A clerkship in Chancery could then only be obtained by purchase, so that he would have been obliged to demand his share of the legacy before alluded to, which it would at that time have been very inconvenient for his father to pay. "This consideration," he says in his autobiography, "I am sure had no weight with my father in his acquiescing in my resolution; but it was decisive with me in forming it. . . . I have often reflected how all my prosperity has arisen out of the pecuniary difficulties and confined circumstances of my father."

Once installed in his new situation, Romilly applied himself to his studies with redoubled ardor. In Mr. Spranger he found an excellent master. He had a very good library, of which Romilly made excellent use. Most of his mornings and a large proportion of his evenings were passed at his house; and Mr. Spranger smoothed away many difficulties, and succeeded in throwing an interest even into those technical preliminaries indispensable to subsequent progress. Commonplace books enabled him to study legal reports with great advantage. But it was not to law alone that he confined his studies. He read a great deal of history, went on improving himself in the classics, and employed himself a good deal in making imaginary speeches. Occasionally he attended the two Houses of Parliament, and accustomed himself to recite in thought, or to answer, the speeches he there heard. That he might lose no time, he generally reserved these exercises for the period of his walking or riding, and before long was able to perform them as he was passing through even the most crowded streets.

It is not to be wondered at that his health, under the strain of such severe labors, speedily gave way. Complete rest for some months was enjoined on him by his medical advisers, and he was recommended to try the effect of change of air. It so happened that as to the latter part of this advice Romilly's duty coincided with his inclination. The Rev. John Roget, who, as was said before, was married to his sister, had been attacked with a pulmonary complaint, and his physician had recommended, as the only chance of saving his life, that he should be removed to his native air. To Geneva he accordingly set out, accompanied by his wife. His health did not much improve after he had settled there, and he and his wife were anxious that their child, who had been left in England, should be conveyed over to them, since there appeared little prospect of their being able to quit Geneva for a considerable time. This friendly office Romilly undertook, travelling by slow and easy stages. The excitement of the journey, the interest roused in him by the various scenes he witnessed, the thought that in the task he was performing he was conferring pleasure upon those he best loved, alike combined to produce a most beneficial effect upon him. He rapidly recovered strength, and the mental languor and uneasiness that had oppressed him were quickly dispelled. He made the acquaintance of some of the leading men in Geneva, and entered into a close friendship with a young man, M. Dumont, afterward destined to gain great and well-merited reputation as the expounder of the deep philosophy and wisdom that lay concealed beneath the uncouth terminology and barbarous jargon of Bentham's writings. In his return homeward he visited Paris, where he had several interviews with D'Alembert and Diderot, and other celebrated inhabitants of the French metropolis. D'Alembert he found in a very infirm state of health, and not much disposed to enter into conversation. Diderot, on the other hand, gave him a very cordial reception, and talked with as little reserve as if he had been long and intimately acquainted with him.

Returning to England, Romilly again entered on a severe



course of study, wisely devoting much attention to the state of public affairs, and to the proceedings of both Houses of Parliament. A series of letters written by him to his friend Roget gives many interesting particulars, of great value to the historian, of English political life at this time. It is interesting to notice that, even at this early period, Romilly's thoughts were turned to the reform of the Criminal Code. In a letter to Roget, written in 1783, he gives his views on the abolition of capital punishment. They show no little acuteness and thought, especially when the youth of the writer is taken into account. "I am much obliged to you," he says, "for giving me your sentiments on the question, whether any crime ought to be punished with death. The objection you make to the punishment of death, founded on the errors of human tribunals and the impossibility of having absolute demonstration of the guilt of a criminal, strikes me more forcibly than any argument I have ever before heard on the same side of the question. I confess, however, that to myself it seems absolutely impossible, even if it were to be wished (of which I am not quite sure), to omit death in the catalogue of human punishments; for if the criminal will not submit to the punishment inflicted on him, if he escapes from his prison, refuses to perform the labor prescribed to him, or commits new crimes, he must, at last, be punished with death. So it is, at least, in the 'Utopia' of Sir Thomas More; and it is a very melancholy reflection that some of the miserable victims of that excellent philosopher's compassion might, if his visions had ever been realized, have suffered years of miserable servitude in addition to the punishment of death, which would at last be inflicted on them as the punishment of the crimes which they had been provoked to commit. One reason why I cannot think that death ought so carefully to be avoided among human punishments is, that I do not think death the greatest of evils. Beccaria and his disciples confess that it is not, and recommend other punishments as being more severe and effectual, forgetting, undoubtedly, that if human tribunals have a right to inflict a severer punishment than



death, they have a right to inflict death itself." He then goes on to say that he hopes his correspondent will not conclude from all this that he was perfectly satisfied with the penal code of Europe, and particularly with that of his own country, where theft, forgery, and every description of the *crimen falsi*, was punished with death. "The laws of our country," he concludes, "may, indeed, be said to be written with blood."

In 1783 Romilly was called to the Bar. To his future career he looked forward with that mixture of modesty and ambition which was characteristic of his character. "Should my wishes be gratified," he said, "I promise myself to employ all my talents and all the authority I may acquire for the public good. Should I fail in my pursuit, I console myself with thinking that the humblest situation of life has its duties, which one must feel a satisfaction in discharging; that, at least, my conscience will bear me the pleasing testimony of having intended well." He did not immediately enter on his profession, but paid a second visit to the Continent, to take home his sister and her child—her husband, Mr. Roget, having died at Geneva. In this tour he was accompanied by a friend, John Baynes, who had a letter of introduction to Benjamin Franklin, then living at Passy. "Dr. Franklin," says Romilly, "was indulgent enough to converse a good deal with us, whom he observed to be young men very desirous of improving by his conversation. Of all the celebrated persons whom, in my life, I have chanced to see, Dr. Franklin, both from his appearance and conversation, seemed to me the most remarkable. His venerable, patriarchal appearance, the simplicity of his manner and language, and the novelty of his observations—at least the novelty of them at that time to me—impressed me with an opinion of him as of one of the most extraordinary men that ever existed."

In 1784 Romilly went the Midland Circuit, when the share of business that fell to him was small. In the same year he was introduced to the celebrated Mirabeau. This introduction was important to Romilly in many ways. Mirabeau, with his

extraordinary insight into character, and facility in using other men as his instruments, immediately engaged him to translate into English a pamphlet he had written against the Order of the Cincinnati, recently established in America, and entered into a frequent and intimate correspondence with him. Through his instrumentality Romilly was introduced to Lord Lansdowne, a nobleman who, whatever may have been the faults of his political career, deserves the high praise of having always been ready to encourage merit and to assist struggling genius. An able "Fragment on the Legitimate Power and Duties of Juries," which Romilly had written and sent anonymously to the Constitutional Society, caused him to be received with marked respect by his lordship, who knew him to be the author. Desirous that he should write some work which might attract the attention of the public, he put into his hands a small tract, Madan's "Thoughts on Executive Justice," with which he had been much impressed, and recommended him to write something on the same subject. Madan, by a mistaken application of the maxim, "that the certainty of punishment is more efficacious than its severity for the prevention of crimes," insisted on the expediency of rigidly executing the penal code in all cases; the work being, in reality, a strong and vehement censure upon the judges and ministers for their mode of administering the law, and for the frequency of the pardons they granted. The pamphlet was widely read, and made a great impression, as was distinctly shown by the fact, that while in 1783, the year before the work was published, there were executed in London only fifty-one malefactors, in 1785, the year after it was published, there were executed ninety-seven. So shocked was Romilly by the folly and inhumanity of the book that he determined to refute it. This he did in a tract entitled "Observations on a late Publication, entitled 'Thoughts on Executive Justice,'" which was very warmly received by his friends, but did not attract much public attention. Lord Lansdowne, who had been greatly influenced by Madan's sophistries, had the candor to acknowledge in high terms the merits of Romilly's

pamphlet, which, though written at his suggestion, contained a refutation of the opinions he wished to inculcate.

At the end of his sixth or seventh circuit Romilly found he had made little or no progress in his profession. He had been employed, it is true, in a few causes; but all the briefs he had had were delivered to him by London attorneys, who had seen his face in London, and who happened to be strangers to the juniors on the circuit. "When a man first makes his appearance in court," he says, "no attorney is disposed to try the experiment whether he has any talents; and when a man's face has become familiar by his having long been a silent spectator of the business done by others, his not being employed is supposed to proceed from his incapacity, and is alone considered sufficient evidence that he must have been tried and rejected." At length he became convinced of the truth of an observation he had heard from Mr. Justice Heath, that "there was no use in going circuit without attending sessions," and he accordingly became a practitioner at the Warwick Sessions. This experiment he found very successful, and his circuit business increased steadily every year, till the demands of his Chancery practice compelled him to give it up entirely.

In 1788 he made a third visit to Paris, accompanied by his friend Dumont. His principal object, he says, was to amuse himself, and to see more of the society of that celebrated city than his former short visits had enabled him to do. When he arrived in Paris he found it in that state of intense agitation which preceded the mutiny of the States-general in the ensuing year. Among the many celebrities he met with were Rochefoucauld, Malesherbes, Lafayette, Chamfort, St. Pierre, and his old acquaintance Mirabeau. Among the objects of curiosity Romilly visited while at Paris was the Bicêtre, a place of confinement then and long afterward very ill-conducted. He was much shocked and disgusted at what he saw there. Meeting Mirabeau soon after, he mentioned the impression that had been made on him, and Mirabeau exhorted him earnestly to put down his observations in writing, and give them to him.

Romilly did so, and Mirabeau translated them into French, and published them in the form of a pamphlet, entitled "*Lettre d'un Voyageur Anglais sur la Prison de Bicêtre*;" to which he added some observations on criminal law, which were, in fact, nearly a translation from Romilly's pamphlet against Madan. On his return to London Romilly printed his original letter on the Bicêtre as a translation from the French. This incident, it has been said, affords a small but curious instance of the difference in character between the two men. Mirabeau published his translation from Romilly as his own work—Romilly published his own work as a translation from Mirabeau.

Early in October Romilly returned to England. Soon after he received a letter from the Count de Sarsfield, requesting him to send him some book which stated the rules and orders of proceeding in the House of Commons. This, he thought, would be extremely useful to assist the States-general in regulating their debates and their modes of transacting business. Romilly made inquiry; and, finding that there was no such book, determined to draw up a statement of the rules of the House of Commons himself. When he had made it as complete as he could he sent it to the Count de Sarsfield, who received it most thankfully, and set about translating it into French. He died, however, before he had advanced far with the work, which was completed and published by Mirabeau. Though there was great need of some such work (the tumult that prevailed in the National Assembly being sometimes so great that Dumont told Romilly it was once pleasantly proposed to establish as a rule that there should never be more than four members speaking at once), it proved not of the smallest use; its rules were contemptuously disregarded; and when Romilly afterward visited Paris, and witnessed the proceedings of the Assembly, he had often occasion to lament that the trouble he had taken was of no avail. Romilly was among those who, in the early stage of the French Revolution, entertained the most sanguine expectations of the happy effects which were to result from it, not to France alone, but to the



rest of the world. About the beginning of 1790 he published a brief treatise inculcating this view, under the title of "Thoughts on the Probable Influence of the French Revolution on Great Britain." As was natural in one of his principles, Romilly's estimate of Burke, the great champion of the anti-revolutionary party in England, was not of the highest. He thought him more a poet than an orator, who, when he had once got hold of a beautiful image, forgot that its only genuine use was to illustrate: ornament, he said, usurped in his composition the place of the subject, while rhetoric and decorated figures absorbed argumentation.

With an account of a visit he paid to Paris in the long vacation of 1789 Romilly's autobiography comes to an end; and the details given of his life from this period till the commencement of his Parliamentary diary in 1806 are very meagre. The increase of his business became so great as to considerably curtail his autumnal holidays, and to put a stop almost entirely to his literary pursuits. A visit he made to the Marquis of Lansdowne's seat, at Bowood, in 1796, was attended with very important results. Twenty years later, when visiting the same place, he thus wrote of the occurrence: "To what accidental causes are the most fortunate circumstances of our lives sometimes to be traced! Some miles from Bowood is the form of a white horse, grotesquely cut upon the Downs, and forming a landmark to a wide extent of the country. To that object it is that I owe all the real happiness of my life. In the year 1796 I made a visit to Bowood. My dear Anne, who had been staying there some weeks, with her father and her sisters, was about to leave it. The day fixed for their departure was the eve of that on which I arrived; and, if nothing had occurred to disappoint their purpose, I never should have seen her. But it happened that on the preceding day she was one of an equestrian party which was made to visit curious objects; she overheated herself by her ride; a violent cold and pain in her face was the consequence. Her father found it indispensably necessary to defer his journey for several days, and



in the mean time I arrived. I saw in her the most beautiful and accomplished creature that ever blessed the sight and understanding of man. A most intelligent mind, an uncommonly correct judgment, a lively imagination, a cheerful disposition, a noble and generous way of thinking, an elevation and heroism of character, and a warmth and tenderness of affection, such as is rarely found even in her sex, were among her extraordinary endowments. I was captivated alike by the beauties of her person and the charms of her mind. A mutual attachment was formed between us, which, at the end of little more than a year, was consecrated by marriage. All the happiness I have known in her beloved society, all the many and exquisite enjoyments which my dear children have afforded me, even my extraordinary success in my profession, the labors of which, if my life had not been so cheered and exhilarated, I never could have undergone—all are to be traced to this trivial cause.” “I now always visit at Lord Lansdowne’s with fresh pleasure,” he says in a letter written about five years after his marriage, “as it was there I first saw my dear Anne, and every spot of that delightful abode brings to my recollection scenes which were only an earnest of that unmixed felicity which I have ever since enjoyed. But I say too much when I call it quite unmixed; for though I cannot consider the irksome and laborious duties of my profession as a real interruption of my happiness, yet it is in truth interrupted by the reflection that in this life everything is subject to change, and that our condition can hardly change but for the worse.” His high estimate of the softer sex was throughout life a pleasing feature of Romilly’s character. “There is nothing,” he said, “by which I have through life more profited than by the just observations, the good opinion, the sincere and gentle encouragement of amiable and sensible women.”

In 1802, after the Peace of Amiens, Romilly, accompanied by his wife, paid a visit to Paris, of which he preserved some account in a brief diary. He was received cordially in the best Parisian society, dining with Talleyrand (“who received

me," he says, "coldly enough, with the air and manner of a great minister, and not of a man with whom I once was intimate"), the Abbé Morellet, Suard, etc., and associating a good deal with the many English notabilities then at Paris, among whom were Fox and Erskine. He was much impressed by the state of France at this time. "It is very curious," he notes, "to consider what France is, to recollect what it has been during the last fourteen years, and to speculate upon what it is likely to be. A more absolute despotism than that which now exists here France never experienced. . . . An opinion is entertained, whether with or without foundation I do not know, that persons of character, and who mix in good society, are spies employed by the police, and consequently that a man is hardly safe anywhere in uttering his sentiments on public affairs. It should seem, however, that few persons have any desire to utter them." Of Napoleon he observes, "That he meditates the gaining of fresh laurels in war can hardly be doubted, if the accounts which one hears of his restless and impatient disposition be true. His literary tastes may serve to give some insight into his character. Ossian is his favorite poet."

In 1805 Romilly was appointed by the Bishop of Durham to the Chancellorship of that diocese. As he and the Bishop had up to this time been very slightly acquainted, Romilly was a good deal surprised when the offer of this situation was made to him, with many flattering compliments; for though he had frequently been counsel both for and against the Bishop in the Court of Chancery, he had never met him in company, and had, indeed, spoken to him only once before. Romilly had happened to mention to Mr. Bernard, a friend of the Bishop, one day, when the conversation had turned upon the sufferings which animals are made to endure, that he thought he and his friends might do a great deal of good by endeavoring to bring into general use a mode of slaughtering cattle which would be attended with much less pain to the animal than that which was commonly practised. Mr. Bernard pressed him to put

down something upon the subject in writing. He did so, and in a few lines insisted on the importance, in a moral and political point of view, of weaning men from the habit of contemplating with indifference the sufferings of any sensitive creature. Bernard showed Romilly's paper to the Bishop, who some time afterward introduced himself to him in the House of Lords, and expressed his surprise that a lawyer, in so much business as he was, could find time to think of such matters. It was probably the favorable impression thus made by Romilly that led the Bishop to confer on him the above-mentioned appointment.

It was about this time that Romilly was brought into contact with the Prince of Wales, by being engaged as his counsel in a cause in which he took a great interest. It related to the guardianship of a daughter of Lord Hugh Seymour, who, from the death of her parents, which happened in her infancy, had remained under the care of Mrs. Fitzherbert. The case was decided in a manner satisfactory to his Royal Highness, to whom Romilly's management of it was so acceptable that he pressed him to accept from him a seat in Parliament. This offer Romilly had not a moment's hesitation in refusing. He was determined to be independent, and not to enter Parliament as the agent of another person, even though that person was the heir-apparent to the crown. This determination he conveyed to the Prince in language so courteous that it could occasion no offence, saying that he had formed for himself an unalterable resolution *never*, unless he held a public office, to come into Parliament but by a popular election or by paying the common price for his seat. "As to the first of these," he said, "I know, of course, that I must never look for it; and as for the latter, I determined to wait till the labors of my profession should have enabled me to accomplish it without being guilty of any great extravagance."

When Romilly wrote the above he probably little thought that the time of his entering Parliament was so near at hand as it proved to be. On the death of Pitt, in 1806, the Grenville

administration came into power. By it Romilly was appointed Solicitor-general, and returned as member for Queenborough. At the same time he was knighted—sorely against his will. “For the last twenty years of his reign,” he says in his diary, “it has pleased his Majesty to knight all attorneys, and solicitors-general, and judges on their appointment, though for the first five-and-twenty years he had never seen the necessity or propriety of it; and now every man who arrives at these situations must submit to the humiliation of having inflicted on him that which is called, but is considered neither by himself nor any other person, an honor.” He was immediately appointed one of the committee to manage the trial of Lord Melville, and soon after was called to sum up the evidence against him—a task which he performed with great skill, but, it is said, with a feebleness of voice which deprived his able speech of its just effect in the vast hall where it was delivered. During his first session in Parliament he appears, for the most part, to have been a silent member, rarely speaking except on questions of law. Even at this early period of his political career we find his attention turned to some topics which afterward engaged much of his time and energy. He remonstrated with Lord Grey on the inhuman severity of the punishments inflicted by courts-martial, saying he had no doubt that the savage punishments to which soldiers and sailors, alone of all British subjects, were exposed had a most fatal influence upon the discipline of the army and upon the character of the nation. He also took occasion to point out to Lord Henry Petty, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the iniquities of lotteries as sources of revenue; he spoke strongly against the slave-trade; and he brought in and carried through a bill amending the law of bankruptcy.

In the beginning of 1807 the attention of Romilly, as Solicitor-general, was called to a case which deserves to be recorded as one of the most curious miscarriages of justice that ever occurred. A sailor of the name of Thomas Wood was tried in 1806 by a court-martial, at Plymouth, on a charge of having



been concerned in the mutiny and murders which took place on board the *Hermione* in 1797. As the prisoner was only twenty-five when he was tried, he could not have been more than sixteen when the crime was committed. The fact was proved by only a single witness; that witness, however, was the master of the *Hermione*, who swore positively that the prisoner was the very man he remembered on board the *Hermione*, and that he saw him taking a very active part in the mutiny. This was the only evidence for the crown; but it was powerfully corroborated by the prisoner's defence, which was delivered in writing, and was, in truth, rather a supplication for mercy than a defence. "At the time when the mutiny took place," it said, "I was a boy in my fourteenth year. Drove by the torrent of mutiny, I took the oath submitted to me on the occasion. The examples of death which were before my eyes drove me for shelter among the mutineers, dreading a similar fate with those that fell if I sided with or showed the smallest inclination for mercy." Then followed entreaties for compassion on the ground of his youth, and a declaration that he had not enjoyed an hour's repose of mind since the event took place. The court found him guilty, and he was sentenced to be hanged. In the mean time his brother and sister, who were in London, heard of his situation, and made application to the Admiralty. They declared that their brother was innocent; that he was not even on board the *Hermione*, but was serving as a boy in the *Marlborough*, at Portsmouth, at the time the mutiny took place. They procured a certificate of this fact from the Navy-office, and transmitted it to Plymouth; but the guilt of the prisoner appeared so manifest from his own defence that no regard was paid to the certificate, and the execution took place. This being commented on in some of the newspapers with great severity, Romilly and the Attorney-general were requested to consider the expediency of prosecuting for a libel the printers of the newspapers. Though neither of them entertained any doubt of the man's guilt, it was deemed advisable to institute an inquiry in order to remove all uncer-



tainty on the point. The result of the inquiry was, that the man was found to have been perfectly innocent, he having been at Portsmouth on board the *Marlborough* when the crime was committed in the *Hermione*. He had applied to another man to write a defence for him, which he had read, thinking it calculated to excite compassion, and more likely to serve him than a mere denial of the fact.

In March, 1807, the short-lived Grenville administration came to an end, and Romilly, of course, quitted his office. On the dissolution of Parliament, which followed, he purchased for £2000 a seat as member for Horsham, from which he was unseated by petition. He then purchased for the same sum a seat as member for Wareham. No sooner had he entered Parliament than he introduced a measure, which had been rejected in the former session, to enable a creditor to obtain the payment of his debts from the landed property of persons dying indebted. The operation of the measure was confined to freehold estates only. On its first introduction the bill had been strongly denounced by Canning, who said he saw in it an attempt to sacrifice the landed to the commercial interest, a dangerous attack made upon the aristocracy, and the beginning of something which might end like the French Revolution. It had also been opposed by Colonel Eyre, who declared that Romilly's bringing in such a measure was to be ascribed to his hereditary love of democracy. Romilly replied that he wondered Colonel Eyre had thought it worth while to inquire about the ancestors of a person so obscure as he was; but the information he had received was so little applicable to him that nothing uttered under such a mistake could cause him a moment's concern; that he had never heard that any persons from whom he was descended had ever concerned themselves much about politics; that all that he knew of them was that, living in affluence under the French monarchy till the Edict of Nantes was revoked, and by a breach of public faith they were no longer permitted to worship God in the way they thought most acceptable to him, they had preferred giving up the pos-

sessions which they had inherited to making a sacrifice of their consciences; and, that they might enjoy religious liberty, they had sought the protection of an English monarchy, and had left their posterity to trust to their own exertions for their support. Rather than give up his project entirely, Romilly determined, in order to disarm Parliamentary opposition, to confine the operation of his bill to the landed estates of traders only. With this important modification, there was not a single word uttered in opposition to the bill in any stage of it. "Country gentlemen," he notes in his diary, "have no objection to traders being made to pay their debts; and, to the honor of men in trade, of whom there are a good many in the House, they too have no objection to it." The bill received the royal assent in August, 1807. In 1815 Romilly made an attempt to pass the original bill, but in vain. Lord Redesdale told the House of Lords that the measure, if adopted, would bring almost all the freehold estates in the kingdom into the Court of Chancery, and would be the means of annihilating, in a course of years, all small freeholds. Lord Eldon spoke with admiration of that regard which our ancient law had always had for landed property, and deplored the ruinous expense of Chancery proceedings. Lord Ellenborough gave it as his opinion that such dangerous innovations tended to destroy the law of primogeniture. The combined eloquence of these three lords was able to prevent the passing of the bill, which had got through the House of Commons without any opposition. It has long since, including copyhold as well as freehold estates, become the law of the land.

On the prorogation of Parliament in August, 1807, Romilly left London to pass the long vacation in the Isle of Wight with his family. During his holidays he thought much over two projects and the best means of carrying them into execution. One of these projects was to invest criminal courts with a power of making to persons who had been accused of felony and had been acquitted a compensation, to be paid out of the county rates, for the expenses they had been put to, the loss of

time they had incurred, and the imprisonment and other evils they had suffered. He did not mean to provide that there should be a compensation awarded in all cases of acquittal, but merely that the court should have a power, if it thought proper, of ordering such a compensation to be paid. The other object he had in view was, in all cases of felonies made capital according to the value of the thing stolen, and where, by the depreciation of money that had since taken place, that standard of guilt had become far different from what it originally was, to re-enact the laws, fixing the sums mentioned in them much higher, and according to the difference between the then and the present value of money. "This," he says, "ought long ago to have been done. As all the articles of life have been gradually for many years becoming dearer, the life of man has, in the contemplation of the legislature, been growing cheaper and of less account. A stop ought to be put to that shameful trifling with oaths, to those pious perjuries (as Blackstone somewhere calls them) by which juries are humanely induced to find things not to be worth a tenth part of what is notoriously their value."

On the opening of Parliament in May, 1808, Romilly had some conversation with his friend Scarlett on the best means of mitigating the severity of the Criminal Code. Scarlett advised him not to content himself with merely raising the amount of the value of property the stealing of which was to subject the offender to capital punishment, but to attempt at once to repeal all the statutes which punished with death mere thefts, unaccompanied by any act of violence or other aggravating circumstance. This suggestion was very agreeable to Romilly; and he accordingly introduced a bill repealing the act of Elizabeth, which made it a capital offence to steal privately from the person to the amount of five shillings. This bill finally became law, though not without encountering a great deal of opposition. "If any person," wrote Romilly, "be desirous of having an adequate idea of the mischievous effects which have been produced in this country by the French Revolution and all its

attendant horrors, he should attempt some legislative reform on humane and liberal principles. He will then find, not only what a stupid dread of innovation, but what a savage spirit, it has infused into the minds of many of his countrymen. I have had several opportunities of observing this. It is but a few nights ago that, while I was standing at the Bar of the House of Commons, a young man, the brother of a peer, whose name is not worth setting down, came up to me and stammered out, 'I am against your bill; I am for hanging all.' I was confounded; and, after endeavoring to find out some excuse for him, I observed that I supposed he meant that the certainty of punishment afforded the only prospect of suppressing crimes; that the laws, whatever they were, ought to be executed. 'No, no,' he said, 'it is not that. There is no good done by mercy. They only get worse; I would hang them up all at once.'

In 1810 Romilly, still persevering in his efforts to ameliorate the Criminal Code, introduced a bill to abolish capital punishment for the crime of stealing to the amount of five shillings in a shop. On its second reading in the House of Lords this bill was rejected by a majority of twenty. The argument principally relied on by those who spoke against the bill was, that innovations in the criminal law were dangerous, and that the present measure was part of a system to innovate on the whole Criminal Code. It was said that the House should consider, not merely the bill itself, but the speculations in criminal jurisprudence of the author of the bill; that he had been the author of the act, passed two years ago, to abolish the punishment of death for the crime of picking pockets; and that the consequence of abolishing that punishment had been a very great increase of the crime. The reply to this, of course, was that the many prosecutions that had been preferred were the strongest proof that the act had been a step in the right direction. It had been stated, when the bill was proposed, that the inordinate severity of the punishment appointed by law prevented those who had been robbed from prosecuting, and by that means secured complete immunity to the offenders. Take



away, it was said, this most severe punishment, and you will have many more prosecutors. These powerful arguments of Romilly and his friends failed to influence the majority of those to whom they were addressed. Lord Ellenborough, adopting the usual course of those opposed to improvements, said there was no knowing where this was to stop; that he supposed the next thing proposed would be to repeal the law which punishes with death the stealing to the amount of five shillings in a dwelling-house, no person being therein; and then he declared that that act it was which afforded security to the poor cottager that he should enjoy the fruits of labor, and pathetically described the situation of the poor, relying with confidence on the security the law afforded them for the scanty comforts which they were allowed. Transportation, the severest punishment which the bill allowed to be inflicted on the offender, he spoke of as one which had few terrors for those who violated the law, and as being justly considered as only "a summer airing by an easy migration to a milder climate." He moreover stated that he doubted whether the judges had not erred by too much lenity, and that it was probably that fault on their part which had encouraged these attempts to alter the law. "The inference to be drawn from this," says Romilly, "is pretty obvious: that in order to discourage such attempts in future, and to deprive those lovers of innovation of one of their arguments—namely, that the practice of the law on this subject is at total variance with its theory—it may be right to enforce the law more rigorously. I may by this means (which God forbid) have been the cause of increasing the very evils which I am most anxious to diminish."

The three bills proposing alterations in the Criminal Law, one relating to stealing in dwelling-houses, another to stealing on navigable rivers, and a third to stealing privately in shops, which Romilly had brought in in 1810, were again introduced by him in 1811. "It is not," he said, when introducing them, "from light motives that I have presumed to recommend an alteration in a thing so important as the Criminal Law of the



land. I have always thought it was the duty of every man to use the means which he possessed for the purpose of advancing the well-being of his fellow-creatures; and I am not aware of any way in which I can advance that well-being so effectually as by adopting the course which I now pursue. Lord Coke used to say 'that he considered every man who was successful in his profession as under an obligation to benefit society.' . . . So, for myself, my success and my good-fortune in my profession \* have laid me under a debt to the society among whom I live; and the way in which I intend to discharge that obligation is, by endeavoring to ameliorate the law, and thus to increase the happiness and security of my country. It is not a little that will discourage me. I am not to be discouraged by the consideration that I have hitherto spent a great deal of time on this subject without doing much good." The bills passed the House of Commons with little opposition, but were thrown out by the Lords.

The indefatigable exertions of Romilly for the public weal had by this time attracted considerable attention throughout the country; and in 1812 he was pressed to allow himself to be nominated for several large constituencies; among others, for Bristol, Liverpool, Chester, and Middlesex. He allowed himself to be put in nomination for Bristol, on condition that he should not be required to canvass personally for votes. "If my past conduct," he said, "has in your judgment rendered me worthy of the high honor of being your representative, it is unnecessary for me to go about soliciting your suffrages; and if it has not, I know of no ground upon which I could presume to make such a request, for I have ever found that those who are most ready with professions are most tardy in performance." At first there seemed a fair prospect that Romilly would be returned, but at length two of his opponents coalesced, and he was thus driven from the field. He gave up the contest in a

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\* He was at this time making an income of between £8000 and £9000 a year.

speech of rare dignity and power, which so affected many who heard it that the tears were seen to stream down their cheeks. Before the Bristol election the Duke of Norfolk had offered, in case he should be unsuccessful there, to bring him into Parliament without any other expense than that of a dinner to the electors. Romilly had formerly determined never to come into Parliament but by popular election or by the purchase by himself of a seat from the proprietor of some borough; but since that time a bill had been passed rendering illegal the purchase of seats in the manner formerly practised; so that there was no choice for him but to come into Parliament in such a way as was now offered to him, or to give up his Parliamentary duties altogether. He decided to accept the duke's generous offer, and in December, 1812, was returned as member for Arundel.

In 1813 he renewed his efforts toward ameliorating the cruel penalties with which crime was then visited. A bill introduced by him to repeal the act which made stealing to the amount of five shillings in shops a capital offence, passed the Commons, but was again thrown out by the Lords. A proposal he made to omit the embowelling and quartering in the punishment of high-treason was defeated by a majority of fifteen; "and so," he records, "the ministers have the glory of having preserved the British law by which it is ordained that the heart and bowels of a man convicted of treason should be torn out of his body while he is yet alive." The quietness with which Romilly mentions in his diary the records of his various defeats is noteworthy. So far was he from wasting his energies in farther indignation, that every defeat only supplied an additional incentive to renewed exertion. It is touching to read how year after year his bills to repeal the shop-lifting act, and to make freehold estates assets to pay simple costs and debts, were got through the House of Commons with little difficulty, and were regularly thrown out by the Lords. In vain Romilly urged that the theory of the law should be brought into harmony with the practice; that nothing was so demoralizing as that laws

should exist of such inhuman severity that they never could be carried out, since, as Henry Fielding had long before observed, "A single pardon excites a greater degree of hope in the minds of criminals than twenty executions excite of fear;" and that over-severe punishments defeated their own end, because people were deterred from prosecuting by the thought that the sentence on the criminal, if convicted, would be out of all proportion to the offence. So great was the discord between the law and the practice at this time, that though there were two hundred capital felonies on the statute-book, yet it appears, by the returns for London and Middlesex, that from 1749 to 1819, a term of seventy years, there were only twenty-five sorts of felonies for which any individuals had been executed; so that there were a hundred and seventy-five capital felonies respecting which the punishment ordained by various statutes had not been inflicted.\* "This rapidly-increasing discordance," says Sir James Mackintosh, "between the letter and the practice of the Criminal Law arose in the best times of our history; and, in my opinion, out of one of its most glorious and happy events. As I take it, the most important consequence of the Revolution of 1688 was the establishment in this country of a Parliamentary government. That event, however, has been attended by one inconvenience—the unhappy facility afforded to legislation. Every member of Parliament has had it in his power to indulge his whims and caprices on that subject; and if he could not do anything else, he could create a capital felony! The anecdotes which I have heard of this shameful and injurious facility I am almost ashamed to repeat. Mr. Burke once told me that on a certain occasion, when he was leaving the House, one of the messengers called him back, and on his saying that he was going on urgent business, replied, 'Oh, it will not keep you a single moment; it is only a felony without benefit of clergy.' He has also assured me that although,

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\* See Sir James Mackintosh's speech "On the State of the Criminal Law," delivered in 1819; "Miscellaneous Works," vol. iii., p. 370.

as may be imagined from his political career, he was not often entitled to ask favor from the ministry of the day, he was persuaded that his interest was at any time good enough to obtain their consent to the creation of a felony without benefit of clergy."

In 1815 Romilly had a severe attack of illness, which for some months almost entirely incapacitated him for the performance of his Parliamentary and professional duties. The following entry in his diary regarding it has a melancholy interest when viewed in the light of subsequent events: "This is the first alarming illness that I have ever experienced. If it had ended in death, perhaps, as far as concerns myself, it had been fortunate. My life had then been one of unchecked prosperity, cheered and animated through the whole of it by the exertion of such faculties as I have possessed in the pursuit of, I hope, no unworthy objects. I had then, at a mature age, but *before my mind had suffered from decay*, left behind me a numerous family of children, whom I could hardly, as to any of them, have wished at their ages to have been other than they are. . . ." During the three remaining years of his life his career presents no distinguishing feature that need detain us. He continued the same ardent and judicious reformer, "incapable on every occasion of being swerved from his duty by the threats of power, the allurements of the great, the temptations of private interest, or even the seduction of popular favor. All the toil, the pain, and the fatigue of his duties were his own; all the advantages which resulted from his labors were for the public." He had not the satisfaction of seeing much practical fruit from his endeavors; what he accomplished was negative rather than positive. Though he failed in procuring the repeal of many obnoxious laws, he redeemed his country from a great disgrace by putting a stop to that career of improvident and cruel legislation which, from session to session, was multiplying capital felonies.\* Besides his labors in Criminal Code amelio-

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\* See the speech of Sir James Mackintosh, formerly cited.



ration, Romilly was an ardent worker in other departments of reform. He strongly opposed military flogging, the Game Laws, the punishment of the pillory, the Poor Laws, the Law of Libel, and lotteries. He was in favor of Free-trade, of Parliamentary Reform, of Catholic Emancipation, and of the liberty of the Press.

In private life Romilly was a singularly lovable man. It is impossible to look at the noble and winning countenance presented in his portrait without perceiving that he was indeed, as Burke said about Fox, "made to be loved." In general society he is said to have been silent and reserved; it was only in the family circle, when all restraint and formality were thrown to the winds, that the joyousness and geniality of his temperament were fully displayed. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature, and had a keen relish for literature and the fine arts. Even in the busiest periods of his life he found time to read as much as many people do who are quite free from all engrossing pursuits. Thus, in August, 1814, though then deeply engaged in watching the progress of his bills through Parliament, we find him writing to his friend Dumont: "This languid season, however, has been chosen by several poets for sending their choicest works into the world. We have a new poem by Rogers, another by Lord Byron, and a ponderous quarto in blank verse from Wordsworth—the laborious inspiration of many years. Bulky as it is, however, it is only the fragment of a larger poem. The title explains what it is—'The Excursion; being a Portion of a Poem entitled "The Recluse."' The scenes are in the humblest walks of life; the hero is a Scotch itinerant peddler. Many of the verses are as prosaic as even Wordsworth ever wrote; and there is no story, and consequently nothing to give the reader any interest in the poem. There are, however, many beautiful lines, and it will certainly be praised with enthusiasm by all worshippers of the Lake poets."

As an orator Romilly must be placed in a very high rank. His language was choice and pure, his arguments clear and well



enforced, and his powers of sarcasm, when he chose to exert them, such as made his opponents tremble. "His manner," writes Lord Brougham,\* "was perfect, in voice, in figure, in a countenance of singular beauty and dignity; nor was there anything in his oratory more striking or more effective than the heartfelt sincerity which it throughout displayed, in topic, in diction, in tone, in look, in gesture." Romilly himself seems to have underrated the success of his speeches in the House of Commons. We have the testimony of a political opponent that his success as a Parliamentary speaker was very considerable.†

In July, 1818, Romilly, who had consented to stand as candidate in response to a numerously signed requisition, was returned by a large majority at the head of the poll for Westminster. This triumph seems to have pleased him not a little; but a terrible domestic calamity, which happened soon after it, utterly effaced all his joy, and left him mourning and desolate. His wife, whom he loved with all the ardor of a strong and gentle nature, died on the 29th of October, 1818. His anxiety during her illness had preyed upon his mind and affected his health, and the shock occasioned by her death brought on a delirium, during which he terminated his existence three days after his wife's death. His tragic end filled the whole country with mourning and tears. Lord Eldon received the news while sitting in the Court of Chancery, and was so affected by it that he rose with tears in his eyes and adjourned the court. Men of all shades of political opinion agreed in lamenting the untimely death of a man whose singular abilities had always been used for pure and noble ends. It was felt that a great man had fallen, and that many a generation might come and go ere another was to be found of such calm wisdom, such unblemished purity, and such moral grandeur.

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\* "Statesmen of the Time of George III."

† *Quarterly Review*, vol. lxvi., p. 615.



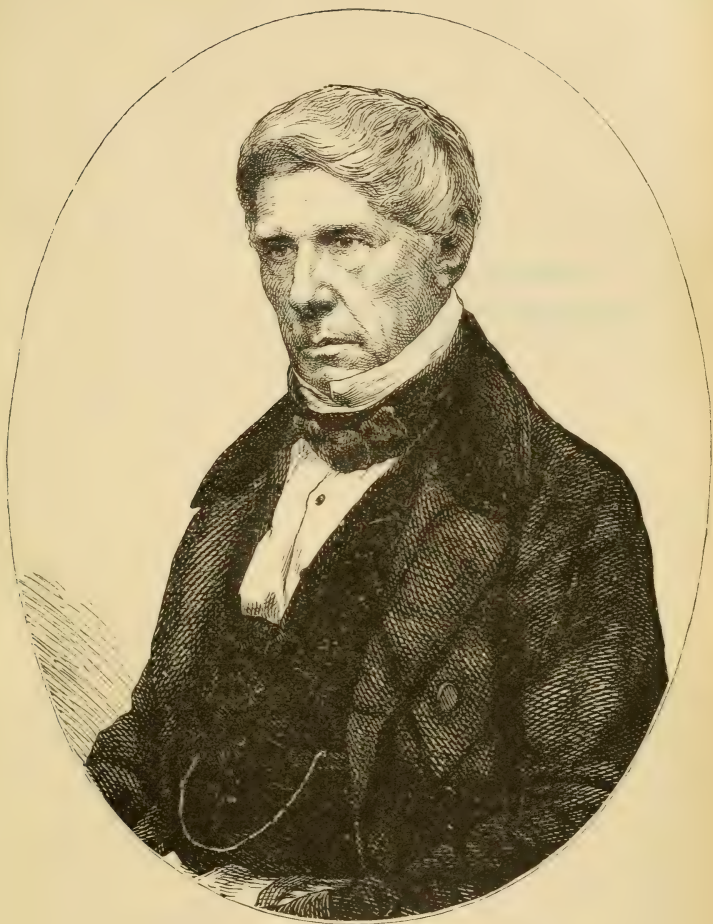
## POPULAR EDUCATION.

*LORD BROUGHAM.*

WHATEVER faults may be laid to the charge of Henry Lord Brougham, none will dispute his title to rank among public benefactors. The untiring energy of his restless and versatile mind would not allow him to content himself with a single field of reform wherein to labor. He was one of the most active of those who forwarded the abolition of slavery; he was a powerful advocate of Parliamentary reform; he cleared the Court of Chancery of abuses without number; and he stood prominently forward as the champion of popular education. In all these capacities his achievements were great and splendid, and might have been yet greater and more splendid but for his many failings, which would have utterly ruined a lesser man, and which threw a cloud over even his extraordinary intellect and powers of labor. By rapid steps he raised himself to a dizzy height, from which he speedily tumbled, never again to rise. His flighty and impetuous nature told constantly against him, and finally led him into such imprudence and indiscretion as cut short his career as a statesman. At one time he was undoubtedly the most popular man in England, and the leading orator of the Whig party; a few short years later he was obliged to resign his high office, and was never again admitted into the confidence of any government. By many of the most eminent of his contemporaries he was held in something very closely approaching to contempt; by many more he was regarded with a hatred which only their fears of his abilities prevented them from expressing. By the people at large, on the

other hand, if we except some few brief periods, Brougham, as long as his public life lasted, was held in high honor and affection, being regarded, rightly or wrongly, as the most able and most vigorous champion of popular rights then living. We can now estimate his character more justly than his contemporaries could do; and if we do not rank him so high as did some of his extravagant admirers, we shall, on the other hand, be far from placing him so low as did his more strenuous detractors. With great faults he united great excellences; and few men can be mentioned who have labored more earnestly in the good work of sweeping away abuses and advancing the cause of progress.

Of his ancient descent Lord Brougham was not a little proud, and with reason. He came of a good Border family which had been settled at Brougham, in Westmoreland, before the Conquest. None of his ancestors, he says, were ever remarkable for anything; and he traces his distinction to the Celtic blood which his mother, Eleanor Syme, a niece of Dr. Robertson, the historian, brought from the clans of Struan and Kinloch Moidart. He was born in Edinburgh, on the 19th of September, 1778, and there he received his education. As may be supposed, he was a remarkably precocious boy, picking up knowledge with great facility, and early distinguishing himself by a presence of mind and dauntless self-confidence which must often have made his company somewhat disagreeable. To his maternal grandmother he says it was that he owed his success in life. She instilled into him from his cradle the strongest desire for information, and, he adds, "the first principles of that persevering energy in the pursuit of every kind of knowledge which, more than any natural talents I may possess, has enabled me to stick to and to accomplish, how far successfully it is not for me to say, every task I ever undertook." At a later period of his life he received valuable assistance in his studies from his distinguished kinsman, Dr. Robertson, whose memory he never ceased to cherish with respect and affection. As a means of improving his style Robertson recommended



HENRY LORD BROUGHAM.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
LIBRARY



translation in preference to original composition; and advised him to exercise himself in it in much the same way as we have seen Romilly did when engaged in his laborious course of self-education.

At seven years of age Brougham was sent to the High School of Edinburgh, of which the head-master at that time was Dr. Adam, a model pedagogue, and one of the most guileless and lovable of men. He was a considerable scholar, with a genuine enthusiasm for learning, which he often succeeded in imparting to his pupils. On Brougham's entry into the High School he was placed under the care of Luke Fraser, one of the masters, in whose class he remained for four years, before being transferred to that of Dr. Adam, the rector. While attending Fraser's class Brougham had a dispute with him on some point of Latinity, regarding which he strenuously insisted that he was right and Fraser wrong. He was punished for his impertinence, but next day he appeared loaded with books, and before the whole class compelled Fraser to acknowledge that he had made a mistake. When he had attended the High School for six years Brougham left it, having attained the proud position of head-boy of the class and school, although he had been absent nearly a year from illness. He then remained at home for about fourteen months, under the care of a tutor. On his return to Edinburgh in October, 1792, he entered the University, where he speedily distinguished himself as a mathematician, attending with eager interest the lectures of Playfair and Dr. Black. So precocious were his attainments, that he was little more than seventeen when he transmitted to the Royal Society a paper describing a series of experiments in optics, which was honored with a place in the "Philosophical Transactions" of 1796. In this paper he had inserted a note containing a discovery of the principle of photography; but the secretary of the Royal Society, considering that the matter referred more to art than to science, unfortunately omitted the passage. Brougham observes, that had the note containing the suggestion appeared in 1796, in all probability it would have set

others on the examination of the subject, and given us photography half a century earlier than we had it.

As he was destined for the Bar, Brougham early inured himself to the practice of public speaking, for which he possessed a great natural faculty. When only fourteen years of age he originated a debating club, called the Juvenile Literary Society, which discussed the various subjects generally dealt with at such institutions. Once the question was, whether the lawyer or the divine is more useful to society. The decision was given in favor of the divine—*all the lawyers voting in the majority*. In 1797 he joined a more ambitious association, the Speculative Society, which was established in 1704, for the purpose of discussing, by written essays and oral debates, questions in history, politics, legislation, and general literature, and which still flourishes with unabated vigor. There he came into contact with all the most rising young men of Edinburgh—no contemptible assemblage—comprising, among others, Murray, Moncreiff, Miller, Loch, Adam, Cockburn, Jardine, and Lord Webb Seymour. At this period of his life Brougham studied hard, not disdaining, at the same time, to diversify his labors by recreations of a kind which would very much astonish the present budding barristers of the Modern Athens. Some of these he relates with pleasing complacency in his “Autobiography.” “The child is father of the man,” and he would be an unnatural parent who should not speak with lurking kindness of his own juvenile peccadilloes. After the day’s work was over, he and some of his companions would adjourn to the Apollo Club, where the orgies were more of the “high jinks” than of the calm and philosophical debating order; or to Johnny Dow’s, famous for oysters. “I cannot tell,” he goes on to say, “how the fancy originated; but one of our constant exploits, after an evening at the Apollo or at Johnny’s, was to parade the streets of the New Town, and wrench the brass knockers off the doors, or tear out the handles of the bells. No such ornaments existed in the Old Town; but the New Town, lately built, abounded in sea-green doors and huge brazen

devices, which were more than our youthful hands could resist. The number we tore off must have been prodigious; for I remember a large dark closet in my father's house, of which I kept the key, and which was literally *filled* with our *spolia opima*. We had no choice but to hoard them; for it is pretty obvious we could not exhibit them or otherwise dispose of them."\*

In June, 1800, Brougham was called to the Bar. He regarded the profession he had entered on with great repugnance, and does not appear to have been at all assiduous in his legal studies. To scientific and literary pursuits, on the other hand, he devoted himself with great eagerness. For his lucubrations on those subjects an admirable vehicle soon appeared. In the humble lodgings of Francis Jeffrey—then, like Brougham, a barrister struggling to rise in his profession—Sydney Smith suggested to Brougham and Jeffrey the idea of starting a critical journal. They received the suggestion with pleasure, and other laborers were speedily obtained. In October, 1802, appeared the first number of the *Edinburgh Review*. Brougham relates that at first Jeffrey was full of doubts and difficulties, and would have cancelled the agreement with Constable the bookseller. He also relates that he himself was an extensive contributor to the first three numbers, and gives a list of his articles. The last of these statements cannot be reconciled with Jeffrey's utterances. He told Robert Chambers that Brougham did not contribute to the first three numbers, in consequence of the repugnance of Sydney Smith to admit him as a member of the critical confederacy, he "having so strong an opinion of Brougham's indiscretion and rashness." Moreover, in a letter to Macvey Napier, of date 1843, he says: "Brougham did not come in till after the third number and our assured success." One would rather credit Jeffrey than Brougham in this matter (for the "Autobiography" contains

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\* When statements of Brougham's are referred to for which no authority is given they are derived from his "Autobiography."

many inaccuracies, on some of which one would be inclined to comment rather severely, if criticism were not disarmed by the fact that the work was not commenced till its writer had reached the patriarchal age of over fourscore years), were it not that Brougham not only relates in general terms that he was a contributor, but gives, as has been said, a complete list of his contributions to the first three numbers, all of them, it is noticeable, on such subjects as he was in the habit of dealing with. On the whole, we are inclined to think that in this case Jeffrey's memory must have failed him; though, if Brougham contributed so many articles as he says he did, it is not a little singular that Jeffrey should have entirely forgotten about them. At any rate, however the case may stand as to the first three numbers, there is no doubt that Brougham soon became one of the most copious contributors to the *Edinburgh*. His articles were chiefly upon political and scientific subjects, though he has the doubtful honor of being the reputed writer of the criticism on Byron's "Hours of Idleness," which provoked the stinging rejoinder of "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." The establishment of the *Review* forms an era in the history of progress. "The tone it took from the first," writes Brougham, "was manly and independent. When it became as much political as literary its attitude was upright and fearless; not a single contributor ever hesitated between the outspoken expression of his opinions and the consequences they might entail on his success in life, whether at the Bar, the Pulpit, or the Senate. The great importance of the *Review* can only be judged of by recollecting the state of things at the time Smith's bold and sagacious idea was started. Protection reigned triumphant; Parliamentary representation in Scotland had scarcely an existence; the Catholics were unemancipated; the Test Acts unrepealed; men were hung in chains for stealing a few shillings in a dwelling-house; no counsel allowed to a prisoner accused of a capital offence; the horrors of the slave-trade tolerated; the prevailing tendencies of the age, jobbery and corruption."

In 1803 Brougham published a treatise, in two volumes, on the "Colonial Policy of the European States," at which he had labored assiduously during the two preceding years. This work attracted considerable attention, and, along with his articles in the *Edinburgh*, caused him to be looked on as one of the most rising young men of the time. The admission of the Whigs to power, in 1806, gave him an introduction to public life, by his appointment as secretary to a special mission to the Court of Lisbon. He was thus brought into contact with many distinguished political characters; and in 1807 we find him corresponding with Earl Grey and other leading members of the Whig party. In the following year he determined to seek a wider field for his ambition than Scotland afforded, and became a member of Lincoln's Inn. In May, 1808, he wrote to Earl Grey that he expected to be called to the Bar early in July, and that he would go the next Northern Circuit, which he preferred to any other, as being the largest field, and in every respect the first thing in that way. No doubt, he said, he set out with too slender a provision of law, and very possibly might never see a jury till he had to address it, his stock of practice being so slender that he had never seen a trial at Nisi Prius. Nevertheless, he had no misgivings. Reflecting that nothing was ever done without risk, and nothing great without danger, he determined to take his chance. "The points of law," he writes, "are few on a circuit, and by good fortune none of any difficulty may fall to me; and as there are no great wizards to go the Northern Circuit, I may push through the thing with a little presence of mind and quickness." An unduly low estimate of his abilities was never among the faults of Henry Brougham. In this case his high expectations were justified by the event, for his success as a barrister was unusually great and rapid.

In 1810 Brougham entered Parliament as member for Camelford, one of the pocket-boroughs of the Duke of Bedford. The destruction of all these snug inlets to the House of Commons by the Reform Bill has often been lamented; and cer-



tainly, in spite of all the abuses in connection with them, they were often very serviceable in affording young men of ability an easy and inexpensive entry on public life. In one of his reviews Lord Brougham has some observations on the inexpediency of young barristers entering Parliament at the commencement of their legal career. "As for the question," he says, "if it can even be made a question, whether a man intending to remain by the law as a profession, and to make it his principal object, does well to accept a seat in Parliament, surely I can have no hesitation in giving my clear negative for answer. It may make him a little earlier known than if he waited in the back row of the King's Bench till chance enabled him to be heard, and his merits showed what is in him, but it makes him unfavorably known for obtaining practice. Clients will always think that he makes politics, not law, his object in life. It is difficult to persuade attorneys and solicitors that a rich man or a nobleman's son is really a candidate for business, though all men see that he has no other pursuit which can interfere with his profession; how much more hard must it be to persuade them that a young lawyer not yet in business cares less for the House of Commons than the court, or that he can well attend to the latter when he is giving his attention to the former. I warn all against falling into such a fatal mistake, and suffering themselves to be seduced from the line of reason and common-sense by a few brilliant but most rare exceptions to the rule which general experience prescribes." To the rule here laid down, which doubtless holds good in most cases, Brougham forms one of the brilliant exceptions. While rapidly rising to eminence as one of the most powerful and original speakers in the House of Commons, he was also one of the most successful counsel of his day, earning over £7000 a year. It was more as a brilliant speaker than as a sound lawyer that he was esteemed, however; and it would have been well for his future happiness had he bestowed more study on the law. His legal attainments were constantly sneered at, and their slenderness gave point to the exquisite epigram of Lord St.

Leonards, that if Brougham knew a little of law he would know a little of everything.

Brougham had not been long in Parliament ere he pushed his way to the very foremost rank as a speaker. It is not unlikely that the Whig leaders regarded with some fear as well as admiration the rash and self-confident young Scotchman, who sat at the feet of no political Gamaliel to learn lessons of wisdom, but in every case acted as seemed good in his own eyes. Never a shadow of doubt of the rectitude of his opinions, never even a momentary want of confidence in his own ability and wisdom, crossed his mind. During his first session he spoke often, and always with success. Of Brougham's talents as an orator there is no doubt whatever. Even Macaulay, whose estimate of him was none of the highest, was constrained to admit that his Parliamentary speaking was admirable.\* His first great effort was a speech he delivered in moving an address to the crown for the better prevention of the slave-trade. "I must protest loudly," he said, in a passage which has often been quoted with admiration, "against the abuse of language which allows such men [those engaged in the slave-traffic] to call themselves traders or merchants. It is not commerce but crime that they are driving. I know too well, and too highly respect, that most honorable and useful pursuit, that commerce whose province it is to humanize and pacify the world—so alien in its nature to violence and fraud—so formed to flourish in peace and in honesty—so inseparably connected with freedom and good-will and fair dealing—I deem too highly of it to endure that its name should, by a strange perversion, be prostituted to the use of men who live by treachery, rapine, torture, and murder, and are habitually practising the worst of crimes for the basest of purposes. When I say murder, I speak literally and advisedly. I mean to use no figurative phrase, and I know I am guilty of no exaggeration. I am speaking of the worst form of that crime. For ordinary mur-

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\* "Correspondence of Macvey Napier," p. 453.

ders there may even be some excuse. Revenge may have arisen from the excess of feelings honorable in themselves. A murder of hatred, or cruelty, or mere blood-thirstiness can only be attributed to a deprivation of reason. But here we have to deal with cool, deliberate, mercenary murder, nay, worse than this, for the ruffians who go on the highway, or the pirates who infest the seas, at least expose their persons, and, by their courage, throw a kind of false glare over their crimes. But these wretches dare not do this. They employ others as base as themselves, only that they are less cowardly; they set on men to rob and kill, in whose spoils they are willing to share, though not in their dangers. Traders or merchants do they presume to call themselves? and in cities like London and Liverpool, the very creations of honest trade? I will give them the right name, at length, and call them cowardly suborners of piracy and mercenary murder." To the majority of cool and impartial readers, we imagine, the foregoing will appear exaggerated and affected, but it must be borne in mind that it may have appeared very differently to eager listeners, who heard it poured vehemently forth from impassioned lips. Charles Fox used to say that no good speech read well. To this maxim Brougham's speeches afford no exception. Often we find in them passages which may be better described as magniloquent than as eloquent; they show a total lack of compression and reticence; and at rare intervals exhibit such instances of execrable taste, that we feel inclined to fling them from us in disgust.

Brougham followed up his motion for an address to the crown on the slave-trade by the introduction, in 1811, of a bill declaring it felony on the part of his Majesty's subjects residing in the United Kingdom, or in any part of the dominions subject to the British crown, to carry on or be engaged in the slave-trade, such offenders being made liable to transportation for fourteen years, or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five or less than three years. This bill was carried through both Houses without a dissenting voice.

The next notable event in Brougham's life was his efforts

for the repeal of the Orders in Council. Already he had acquired distinction by arguing against them at the Bar of the House of Lords in behalf of the traders of London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham. These famous Orders originated in the decree of the Emperor Napoleon issued at Berlin, in 1806, declaring the British Isles in a state of blockade; all British subjects, wherever found, prisoners of war; and all British goods, wherever taken, lawful prize. England was ill-advised enough to retaliate by Orders in Council declaring all the French dominions to be in a state of permanent blockade, and empowering the British cruisers to capture any neutral vessel which should attempt to enter any of the enemy's ports without first touching at a British port and paying duty. The adoption of this rash measure eventually led to a war with America, and inflicted a very serious injury on British trade. In his speech on the subject, in 1812, Brougham drew a thrilling picture of the distress which the Orders had caused to the cotton-weavers and spinners. "The food," he said, "which now sustains them is reduced to the lowest kinds, and of that there is not nearly a sufficient supply; bread, or even potatoes, are now out of the question; the luxuries of animal food, or even milk, they have long ceased to think of. Their looks as well as their apparel proclaim the sad change in their condition." Mainly through his untiring efforts the Orders were rescinded in June, 1812. "The Repeal of the Orders in Council," he says, in his "Autobiography," "was my greatest achievement. It was second to none of the many efforts made by me, and not altogether without success, to ameliorate the condition of my fellow-men. In these I had the sympathy and aid of others, but in the battle against the Orders in Council I fought alone." A great writer has described in vivid colors with what joy and excitement the repeal of the Orders was hailed: "On the 18th of June, 1812, the Orders in Council were repealed, and the blockaded ports thrown open. You know very well—such of you as are old enough to remember—you made Yorkshire and Lancashire shake with your



shout on that occasion: the ringers cracked a bell in Briarfield belfry: it is dissonant to this day. The Association of Merchants and Manufacturers dined together at Stilbro', and one and all went home in such a plight as their wives would never wish to witness more. Liverpool started and snorted like a river-horse roused among his reeds by thunder. Some of the American merchants felt threatenings of apoplexy, and had themselves bled; all, like wise men, at the first moment of prosperity, prepared to rush into the bowels of speculation, and to delve new difficulties in whose depths they might lose themselves some future day. Stocks, which had been accumulating for years, now went off in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; warehouses were lightened, ships were laden, work abounded, wages rose: the good time seemed come. These prospects might be delusive, but they were brilliant—to some they were even true. At that epoch, in that single month of June, many a solid fortune was realized."\* Enthusiastic votes of thanks for the great victory he had won were received by Brougham from most of the manufacturing towns, and he was invited to stand as candidate for Liverpool at the approaching general election. As the Duke of Bedford had sold his pocket-borough of Camelford, and Brougham could no longer be returned as member for it, he accepted the Liverpool offer. After a spirited contest against a no less distinguished adversary than Canning, he was defeated, and for three years had no seat in Parliament.

In the autumn of 1812 Brougham appeared as counsel for Leigh Hunt and his brother, who were prosecuted for a libel on the Prince Regent, inserted in the *Examiner*. With great bitterness and with perfect truth they had declared that the Prince was "a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in debt and disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who has just closed half a century without one single claim to the gratitude of his

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\* Charlotte Brontë, "Shirley," chap. xxxvii.



country or the respect of posterity." Brougham conducted their defence with much spirit and energy. "I fired," he writes to Earl Grey, "for two hours very close and hard into the Prince—on all points, public and private—and in such a way that they could not find any opening to break in upon, and were, therefore, prevented from interrupting me. . . . In summing up, Ellenborough attacked me with a personal bitterness wholly unknown in a court, and toward a counsel—who, you know, is presumed to speak his client's sentiments—most gross and unjustifiable." The Hunts were found guilty, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, in separate jails.

In 1816 Brougham was returned for Winchelsea, in the interest of Lord Darlington. This seat he held for six years. In these days of nomination-seats it would no doubt have been an easy matter to bring Brougham into Parliament immediately after the Liverpool disaster, but it is said that the great Whigs were not ill-pleased that a check should be administered to the young Northern adventurer, "who made himself so conspicuous, who meddled with everything, and was not at all deterred by difficulties from pushing his way to the front." Brougham was not ignorant of the disfavor with which he was regarded. In one of his letters to Lord Grey, written a year after the general election, he speaks of "the pleasure of a great many of the party to consider me, or affect to consider me, 'flung overboard to lighten the ship.'" The opinion of Sir Samuel Romilly, one of the wisest and best of men, about Brougham, probably expresses what was thought of him at this time by the majority of his friends. Referring to a famous tirade of Brougham's against the Regent, he writes in his diary for March, 1816: "Brougham is a man of the most splendid talents and the most extensive acquirements, and he has used the ample means which he possesses most usefully for mankind. It would be difficult to overrate the services which he has rendered the cause of the slaves in the West Indies, or that of the friends to the extension of knowledge and education among the poor, or to praise too highly his endeavors to serve the op-

pressed inhabitants of Poland. How much is it to be lamented that his want of judgment and of prudence should prevent his great talents and such good intentions from being as great a blessing to mankind as they ought to be !”

Among Brougham’s first acts on his again taking his place in Parliament was to introduce a bill on the law of libel, and for securing the liberty of the Press. This bill, of which the preamble was “for the more effectually securing the liberty of the Press, which has been the chief safeguard of the constitution of these realms, and for the better preventing of abuses in exercising the said liberty and improving the privilege of public discussion which of undoubted right belongeth to the subject,” made no progress whatever, and was abandoned. About the same time he directed his attention to the flagrant abuses which prevailed in the educational and other corporation charities of England ; and by several able speeches attracted much public attention to the subject. In 1818 he introduced and carried through a bill appointing commissioners to inquire into the alleged abuses. Jeremy Bentham, who had no great liking for Brougham, accused him many years afterward of allowing the subject to be frittered away, and declared that the only result was a batch of expensive Chancery suits. Bentham’s opinion on this, as on many other things, must not be implicitly relied on. He thought, very unjustly, that Brougham was the moving spirit of the attacks made on him and his system by the *Edinburgh Review* ; and, in spite of Brougham’s emphatic disclaimer of all responsibility as to their authorship, continued to regard him with the same aversion as before. His opinion of him he summed up in the following detestable lines :

“O Brougham ! a strange mystery you are,  
*Nil fuit unquam sibi tam dispar ;*  
So foolish and so wise ; so great, so small ;  
Everything now, to-morrow naught at all.”

On what Brougham himself appears to have regarded as the most important episode of his life—his connection with Queen Caroline—we shall touch very briefly. It is an unsavory sub-

ject, and its details have now almost lost their interest. To it the greater part of the second volume of the "Autobiography" is devoted; and we are safe to say that few indeed there are, save the conscientious biographer, who could find patience to read through the tedious narrative. Indeed, the whole "Autobiography" is a singularly uninteresting work, especially when one considers how entertaining it might have been. Of his many-colored life Brougham might have related such a narrative as would have fascinated every reader and taken a permanent place in literature. As it is, his "Autobiography," considering its size, contains remarkably few materials to aid the biographer, while its inaccuracy and one-sidedness deprive it of the historical value it might otherwise have possessed.

During the long quarrel between the unfortunate lady and her husband Brougham had acted as her law adviser and as her faithful and strenuous friend. His speech in defence, in 1820, after the hearing of the King's witnesses in support of the Bill of Pains and Penalties, has been by some regarded as the crowning effort of his oratory. The peroration in particular has been much admired. "My lords," he said, "I pray you to pause; I do earnestly beseech you to take heed. You are standing on the brink of a precipice—then beware. It will go forth as your judgment, if sentence shall go against the Queen. But it will be the only judgment you ever pronounced which, instead of reaching its object, will return and bound back upon those who gave it. Save the country, my lords, from the horrors of this catastrophe; save yourselves from this peril; rescue that country of which you are the ornaments, but in which you can flourish no longer, when severed from the people, than the blossom when cut off from the roots and the stem of the tree. Save that country, that you may continue to adorn it; save the court, which is in jeopardy; the aristocracy, which is shaken; save the altar, which must stagger with the blow that rends its kindred throne. You have said, my lords—you have willed—the Church and the King have willed—that the Queen should be deprived of its solemn service. She has, instead of

that solemnity, the heartfelt prayers of the people. She wants no prayers of mine. But I do here put forth my humble supplications at the Throne of Mercy that that mercy may be poured down upon the people, in a larger measure than the merits of their rulers may deserve, and that your hearts may be turned to justice!" It is impossible to believe that this tawdry rhetoric could have had much influence on the peers; but it told greatly on the people at large, who were enthusiastically in favor of the Queen; and his speech on this occasion raised Brougham to the rank of a popular hero of the first magnitude. The extravagant commendations which the passage we have quoted has received from some, show how widely opinions about oratory differ. By most people of refinement it will, we fancy, be regarded in a ludicrous light.

In 1820 Brougham introduced his first education bill, commonly called "The Parish School Bill." His notice of it in the "Autobiography" is very slight. He merely states that he was prevented from carrying it by the absurd and groundless prejudice of the Dissenters, when it was supported by the Church—the Dissenters opposing it because it was so supported. From other sources we are able to obtain some account of the bill; and we can easily see why it should have been so obnoxious to Dissenters and so favored by Churchmen. Schools were to be founded upon the recommendation or presentment of a grand-jury—of the clergyman of a parish—or of two justices of the peace acting for an ecclesiastical district, the appeal as to the necessity of the school lying to the magistrates at quarter-sessions. The school-master's salary was not to be less than twenty pounds or more than thirty pounds; and he was required to have a certificate of character from some clergyman of the Establishment. "With permission of the resident parson," the rate-payers, at a properly convened meeting, might raise the school-master's salary. To the clergyman of the parish was given the absolute veto upon the appointment of the master, and the power of summary dismissal. "The clergy," said Brougham, "were the teachers of the poor



—not only teachers of religion, but, in the eye of the law, teachers generally. What, then, could be more natural than that they should have control over those who were elected to assist them? It did appear to him that the system of public education should be clearly connected with the Church of England as established by law. He stated this after mature consideration, and he was anxious to make the statement, because on a former occasion he did not go quite so far as he now did. He had then abstained from going so far because he dreaded the opposition of the sectaries." Talking of the disparity there would be between the salaries paid to the masters of grammar-schools upon ancient foundations and the bare existence his bill would allot to the new school-masters, he said it would have an advantage analogous to that which existed in the Church. Many persons objected that in the Church one individual should have £20,000 a year, while another labored for fifty pounds a year; but, he argued, the good must be weighed with the bad, and this good would be found in the disparity of income, that by how much £20,000 was superior to fifty pounds was the character improved and the class raised of the person who had fifty pounds. This reasoning does not seem particularly convincing. The class of men from which parish school-masters with a salary of thirty pounds a year would have been chosen, would have been of quite a different order from the masters of grammar-schools; and none of them could have indulged the slightest hope of rising so high as to obtain the head-mastership of a richly endowed institution.

As may be imagined, with his vast amount of Parliamentary and legal business, Brougham was at this time an exceedingly hard-worked man. "Brougham, I think, does not look well. He has been too busily engaged. If he would stint himself to doing twice as much as two of the most active men in London, it would do very well." So wrote Sydney Smith in 1819. In the autumn of that year Brougham married Mrs. Spalding, the widow of Mr. John Spalding, of Holm, New Galloway, by whom he had two daughters, the elder of whom died at an early age,



and the younger after she had grown up to womanhood. It has been stated that, previous to this time, Brougham had been a suitor for the hand of Lady Vane Tempest, a lady whose united beauty and wealth had attracted crowds of admirers. His claims were favored by her guardian, Michael Angelo Taylor; but the lady gave her hand to Sir Charles Stewart, brother of Lord Castlereagh. It has been alleged that Brougham's disappointment in this matter had something to do with the numerous bitter attacks he made on that nobleman.

In 1822 Brougham delivered one of the ablest and most sarcastic of his legal addresses. On the death of Queen Caroline, in 1821, the clergy of Durham Cathedral refused to allow the church-bells to be tolled, as they generally are on the death of any member of the royal family. This mark of disrespect called forth an indignant article in the *Durham Chronicle*, for the publication of which the proprietor was prosecuted for libel. His defence was conducted by Brougham in a speech full of the bitterest irony. "His Majesty," said he, "almost at the time I am now speaking, is about to make a progress through the Northern provinces of this island, accompanied by certain of his chosen counsellors—a portion of men who enjoy unenvied, and in an equal degree, the admiration of other countries and the wonder of their own. In Scotland the Prince will find much loyalty, great learning, and some splendor—the remains of a great monarchy and the institutions which made it flourish; but, strange as it may seem, and, to many who hear me, incredible, from one end of the country to the other there is no such thing as a bishop—not such a thing is to be found from the Tweed to John-o'-Groat's House; not a mitre; no, not so much as a minor canon, or even a rural dean, so entirely rude and barbarous are they in Scotland; in such outer darkness do they sit, that they support no cathedrals, maintain no pluralists, suffer no non-residence; nay, the poor, benighted creatures are ignorant even of tithes. Not a sheep, or a lamb, or a pig, or the value of a plough-penny do the hapless mortals render from year's end to year's end! Piteous as their lot

is, what makes it infinitely more touching is, to witness the return of good for evil in the demeanor of this wretched race. Under all this cruel neglect of their spiritual concerns, they are actually the most loyal, contented, moral, and religious people anywhere, perhaps, to be found in the world. Let us hope (many, indeed, there are, not afar off, who will with unfeigned devotion pray) that his Majesty may return safe from the dangers of his excursion into such a country—an excursion most perilous to a certain portion of the Church, should his royal mind be infected with a taste for cheap Establishments, a working clergy, and a pious congregation." Brougham's sarcasms, which, though clever, were in truth rather wide of the mark, did not make much impression on the Durham jury, and the accused was found guilty. Owing, however, to a technical defect in the proceedings, he was never called up to receive judgment.

The discrepancy between the tone adopted regarding the Church of England in the passage we have just quoted and the manner in which it was spoken of in the speech introducing the "Parish School Bill," cannot fail to strike every reader. Inconsistency was one of the numerous charges brought against Brougham by his opponents, and apparently there were good grounds for the accusation. No wise man considers it a fault in any one to alter his opinion when increased knowledge and experience have brought him new light and caused him to see that his former position was untenable. In such a case inconsistency is not a vice but a virtue; for to stick to an opinion merely because you have once held it, and are unwilling to belie your former sentiments, is alike foolish and criminal. But when a man alters his opinion, not because he is convinced that it was erroneous, but simply because he thinks another view of the subject will serve his purpose better for the time being, people have a right to complain of his inconsistency. That Brougham was frequently inconsistent in the bad sense of the word cannot, we think, be doubted. Glorifying in the triumphs of the hour, if he could secure applause at the time

he thought little of how his words and actions might appear when they could be estimated with tranquil impartiality. The flightiness and restlessness of his intellect were a great source of annoyance to his friends, and often led him into faults which did much to mar the success of his career.

In 1824 Brougham came again prominently before Parliament in connection with slavery. An insurrection had taken place at Demerara, and a missionary, a Mr. Smith, was held to have been the instigator of the revolt. He was thrown into prison, and died there from the cruel treatment he had received from a band of slave-holders. A motion of Brougham, that the authorities of Demerara should be censured for this atrocity, was opposed by Canning, and lost by a considerable majority, after a debate of two nights' duration. During this session Brougham constantly spoke and voted against Canning's administration.

In 1825 a distinguished tribute was paid to Brougham's eminence by his being elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University. His opponent was Sir Walter Scott. The votes recorded to the two candidates were equal, but the casting-vote of Sir James Mackintosh, the former Rector, was given in favor of Brougham, who was accordingly appointed. The speech he delivered on the occasion of his inauguration was principally on the advantages of classical learning. It is a favorable specimen of Brougham's oratory, though, like most of his speeches, somewhat too rhetorical, and containing certain things which appear to have been said rather because they sounded well than because they were true. While he was in Scotland the opportunity was taken of entertaining him at a public dinner at Edinburgh. From the account given of it in the "Autobiography," it appears to have been a great success. Henry Cockburn, who was chairman, in proposing Brougham's health, referred to his education in Edinburgh, and to the great influence the Scotch system had had upon his achievements, which he described as greater than had ever been attained by the intellectual powers of a single and unaided man. He then alluded

to the Queen's trial, particularly dwelling on the courage—greater, he said, than even the ability—which Brougham had displayed in standing up alone against all the powers of a king and his subservient ministers. He then especially spoke of what Brougham had done for the education of the people, which, he predicted, would be his most appropriate monument, and far greater and far more enduring than any statue, or any commemorative emblem in Westminster Abbey.

In the debates on Catholic Emancipation, which occupied much of the session of 1825, Brougham figured conspicuously, standing forward as the champion of liberty. On the dissolution of Parliament in 1826 he stood as candidate for Westmoreland, and, as on two former occasions (in 1817 and 1820), was defeated by a large majority. Accordingly he was obliged to resume his old place as representative of Lord Darlington's borough in Winchelsea.

In February, 1828, Brougham delivered his great speech on Law Reform, a subject to which his attention had been much directed for many years. In 1823 he had advocated law reform in various important branches, particularly in reference to the delays in the Court of Chancery. But all his former achievements in this direction sink into insignificance compared with his great effort of 1828. Various accounts are given as to the length of his speech. Some say it occupied six hours in delivery, others seven, others nine. Though, owing to the unattractive nature of the subject, there were not a hundred members in the House the whole evening, it is said that there never was a speech delivered in Parliament which produced so great an impression on the country. It included a survey of the whole structure and administration of the law. In it Brougham dwelt on the jurisdiction of the superior courts, and on the fees then allowed to the judges, in addition to their fixed salaries—an abuse which had often been animadverted on by Romilly—and spoke of the evils of judicial appointments being made under the influence of political considerations; he recommended alterations in the law terms; he commented on



the Court of Admiralty and upon the Privy Council; he exposed the technicalities in pleading; he adverted to the subject of juries; and suggested that parties should be allowed to be witnesses in their own cases. Of course this summary does not include many of the topics he touched on; but it may serve to give some idea of the range of the speech. He concluded with a really noble appeal in favor of codification, of which we may quote the closing sentences as a very favorable example of his oratory: "It was," he said, "the boast of Augustus—it formed part of the glare in which the perfidies of his earlier years were lost—that he found Rome of brick and left it of marble; a praise not unworthy of a great prince, and to which the present reign also has its claims. But how much nobler will be the sovereign's boast, when he shall have it to say that he found law dear and left it cheap; found it a sealed book—left it a living letter; found it the patrimony of the rich—left it the inheritance of the poor; found it the two-edged sword of craft and oppression—left it the staff of honesty, and the shield of innocence! To me, much reflecting on these things, it has always seemed a worthier honor to be the instrument of making you bestir yourselves in this high matter than to enjoy all that office can bestow—office, of which the patronage would be an irksome encumbrance, the emoluments superfluous to one content, with the rest of his industrious fellow-citizens, that his own hands minister to his wants. And as for the power supposed to follow it—I have lived near half a century, and I have learned that power and place may be severed. But one power I do prize: that of being the advocate of my countrymen here, and their fellow-laborer elsewhere, in those things which concern the best interests of mankind. That power I know full well no government can give—no change take away!" The immediate result of this speech was the appointment of two commissions, the Common Law Commission and the Real Property Commission. Its indirect results were far more important, and influenced the course of legislation for a long series of years. It is a striking instance of the impres-



sion it made on the comparatively few members who were fortunate enough to hear it, that Mr. Huskisson, who, expecting a dull debate on law, had invited a party to dinner on the night in which it was delivered, was so fascinated by the wonderful display, that, unmindful of guests and dinner, he sat it out to the end.\*

On the accession of the Duke of Wellington to power, Brougham, though strenuously supporting the Catholic Emancipation Bill, opposed the general policy of the government. In consequence of this opposition he found himself constrained in honor to vacate his seat for Winchelsea, as the Duke of Cleveland, his patron, had declared his resolution to support the ministerial policy. He accordingly gratefully accepted an offer of the Duke of Devonshire to return him as member for Knaresborough. On his informing the Duke of Cleveland of his resolution, the Duke replied that, though he had suffered many grievances and disappointments in the course of a long political life, he never experienced one which caused him so much sorrow as Brougham's decision no longer to remain member for Winchelsea. After an interview with Brougham, he became more reconciled to his view of the matter. In the beginning of 1830 Brougham was returned member for Knaresborough, a position he was not destined to hold long. In June, 1830, George IV. died, and a dissolution of Parliament took place soon after.

In the general election which followed the dissolution, Brougham was invited to stand as candidate for Yorkshire, the largest and most important constituency in the kingdom. The invitation was coupled with an assurance that he was to be put to no expense. His successful efforts in the repeal of the Orders in Council, the popularity he had acquired by the Queen's case, and the part he had taken on slavery and the slave-trade, had combined to secure him a large amount of influential support. He therefore determined to accept the flat-

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\* *Quarterly Review*, No. 210, p. 518.

tering proposal, and at once began his canvass. The election took place during the assizes; and it so happened that Brougham had an unusual number of briefs, some in very important cases. These it was not possible for him either to give up or turn over to his juniors. In consequence, the amount of labor he had to go through was very great indeed. He was obliged, he says, after a night of hard reading and preparation, to be in court every morning by half-past nine o'clock; then he had to address the jury, to examine and cross-examine witnesses—in short, to work for his various clients just as if there had been no such thing pending as an election. Then, as soon as the court rose, or even sooner, he jumped into a carriage and was driven as fast as four horses could go to the various towns—many of them twenty or thirty miles from York; at each considerable town he had to make a speech; never getting back to York till nearly midnight, after which he had to read his briefs for next day in court. This kind of life lasted nearly three weeks. He relates that he never in his life felt better than during the whole of that laborious time, or more capable of even farther exertion, had such been called for. As everybody anticipated, his contest ended in an easy victory. “I have said before,” he writes in the “Autobiography,” “that the repeal of the Orders in Council was my greatest achievement. I say now that my return for the great county of York was my greatest victory, my most unsullied success. I may say without hyperbole that when, as knight of the shire, I was begirt with the sword, it was the proudest moment of my life. My return to Parliament by the greatest and most wealthy constituency in England was the highest compliment ever paid to a public man.”

The result of the general election was, that a majority of the new House of Commons was pledged to Parliamentary Reform. The Duke of Wellington having very unwisely declared, in the House of Lords, that not only was he not prepared to bring forward any measure of reform, but that, so long as he held any station in the government of the country,

he should always feel it his duty to resist such measures when proposed by others, a strong feeling against the existing ministry was immediately manifested. Soon after Sir Henry Parnell moved that the consideration of the Civil List be referred to a select committee. This motion was opposed by Sir Robert Peel on the part of government, but was carried by a majority of 233 to 204. This showed the weakness of the government, and next day the Duke of Wellington's ministry resigned, and Earl Grey received the King's commands to form an administration. Everybody anticipated that Brougham would form a prominent member of the new government; the general surprise, therefore, was great when, two days after the resignation of the Wellington ministry, he declared that he had no concern whatever in the political arrangements which were supposed to be going on, and intended to have no concern with them. It was plain from this that a serious hitch had occurred. Refusing to occupy a subordinate position, after sundry negotiations he was offered the Great Seal, and on November 22, 1830, took his seat on the Wool-sack as Lord Brougham and Vaux, Lord High Chancellor of England.

It need not be wondered at that Brougham quitted the House of Commons with reluctance. "I gave up," he says, "the finest position in the world for a man like me—a man who loved real power, cared little for any labor, however hard, and less for any rank, however high." In truth, Brougham was a man singularly ill-adapted for the calm and dignified atmosphere of the Upper House. Instead of the sympathetic audience which would have listened to his pleadings for Reform in the Commons, he had to address a body of which the great majority regarded the scheme with aversion and disgust—an aversion and disgust by no means mitigated by any feelings in favor of Brougham personally. His arrogance and rashness intensified the dislike with which he was regarded, while his eloquence was of a kind much more suited to the Commons than to the Lords, where his flights of oratory—sometimes sufficiently fantastic, it must be allowed—were more laughed

at than admired. Characteristically enough, he entered on his new position with not a shade of diffidence. "The thing which dazzled me most," he said, a few days after his appointment, speaking from the Wool-sack, "in the prospect opened to me by the acceptance of office, was not the gewgaw splendor of the place, but because it seemed to afford me—if I were honest, on which I could rely; if I were consistent, which I knew to be a matter of absolute necessity in my nature; if I were able, as I was honest and consistent—a field of more extended exertions. That by which the Great Seal dazzled my eyes, and induced me to quit a station which till that time I deemed the proudest which an Englishman can enjoy, was that it seemed to hold out to me the gratifying prospect that, in serving my king, I should better be able to serve my country."

No sooner was he appointed Chancellor than Brougham introduced four bills (the Local Courts Bill, two bills for regulating the practice of the Court of Chancery, and a bill for establishing the Court of Bankruptcy), having various legal reforms as their object. "Look at the gigantic Brougham," said Sydney Smith in the famous passage which has been so often quoted, "sworn in at twelve o'clock, and before six P.M. he has a bill on the table abolishing the abuses of a court which has been the curse of England for centuries. For twenty-five long years did Lord Eldon sit in that court, surrounded with misery and sorrow, which he never held up a finger to alleviate. The widow and the orphan cried to him as vainly as the town-crier when he offers a small reward for a full purse. The bankrupt of the court became the lunatic of the court; estates mouldered away and mansions fell down, but the fees came in, and all was well; but in an instant the iron mace of Brougham shivered to pieces this House of Fraud and of Delay. And this is the man who will help to govern you—who bottoms his reputation on doing good to you—who knows that to reform abuses is the safest basis of fame and the surest instrument of power—who uses the highest gifts of reason and the most splendid efforts of genius to rectify all those abuses which all the genius



and talent of the profession have hitherto been employed to justify and protect. Look you to Brougham, and turn you to that side where he waves his long and lean finger; and mark well that face which nature has marked so forcibly—which dissolves pensions, turns jobbers into honest men, scares away the plunderer of the public, and is a terror to him that doeth evil to the people!" By men of all parties Brougham's services as a legal reformer have been extolled; and though perhaps Sydney Smith, in the above extract, somewhat exaggerates the good results of the measures he introduced, there is no doubt that he really accomplished much. "Many of the measures originally proposed by him," says Sir Eardley Wilmot, who published a collected edition of Brougham's acts and bills from 1811 to 1857, "meeting at first with no encouragement, but persevered in with a confidence of their utility which no opposition could subdue, met with slow but ultimate success. The value of others was at once so manifest that they became the law of the land without a dissenting voice. Not unfrequently the most important improvements in our jurisprudence, initiated by his suggestive genius, passed into the hands and contributed to swell the reputation of men of far less capacious intellect, but whom political partisanship or accidental circumstances had rendered for a time more powerful in the senate."

In October, 1831, Brougham made his famous speech on the second reading of the Reform Bill in the House of Lords. High praise cannot be awarded to it. It began in a strain of ridiculous exaggeration. "And if I," he said, "now standing with your lordships on the brink of the most momentous decision that ever human assembly came to at any period of the world, and seeking to arrest you, while it is yet time, in that position, could, by any divination of the future, have foreseen in my earlier years that I should live to appear here and act as your adviser on a question of such awful importance, not only to yourselves, but to your remotest posterity, I should have devoted every day and every hour of that life to preparing



myself for the task which I now almost sink under" (!). This is absurd enough, but it is nothing to the absurdity of the peroration. "I pray you and exhort you not to reject this measure. By all that you hold most dear—by all the ties that bind every one of us to our common order and our common country, I solemnly adjure you—I warn you—I implore you—yea, on my bended knees"—here he knelt on the Wool-sack—"I supplicate you—reject not this bill!" This piece of stage clap-trap, reminding one of the story of Burke and the dagger, was not soon forgotten by the opponents of the bill, who chuckled greatly over it. Yet the speech was, on the whole, far from a contemptible one. Lord Althorpe writes in a letter: "All agree that it was the best he ever made. Grey and Holland both say it was superhuman—that it united all the excellences of the ancient with those of modern oratory, and that the action and delivery were as much applauded as the speech itself. Lord Holland expressed himself quite as warmly to me to the same effect. He observed that he had not heard so fine a speech even from his uncle Charles (Fox); and this was his idea of the perfection of public speaking."

It may not be uninteresting to insert here the judgment which a writer, whose name is pronounced with reverence wherever the English language is spoken, had formed of Brougham at this time, while the country far and wide was ringing with his praises, and he was looked up to as the best and bravest advocate of the popular cause. In Mr. Trevelyan's admirable "*Life of Lord Macaulay*"\* is given an extract from the diary of Macaulay's sister, dated November 27, 1831, relating a conversation she had with him about Brougham. It runs as follows: "I am just returned from a long walk, during which the conversation turned entirely upon one subject. After a little previous talk about a certain great personage (Brougham), I asked Tom when the present coolness between them began. He said, 'Nothing could exceed my respect and admiration for him in

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\* Vol. ii., p. 186.

early days. I saw at that time private letters in which he spoke highly of my articles, and of me as the most rising man of the time. After a while, however, I began to remark that he became extremely cold to me—hardly ever spoke to me on circuit, and treated me with marked slight. If I were talking to a man, if he wished to speak to him on politics or anything else that was not in any sense a private matter, he always drew him away from me instead of addressing us both. When my article on Hallam came out he complained to Jeffrey that I took up too much of the *Review*; and when my first article on Mill appeared he foamed with rage, and was very angry with Jeffrey for having printed it. ‘But,’ said I, ‘the Mills are friends of his, and he naturally did not like them to be attacked.’ ‘On the contrary,’ said Tom, ‘he had attacked them fiercely himself; but he thought that I had made a hit, and was angry accordingly. When a friend of mine defended my articles to him, he said, “I know nothing of the articles. I have not read Macaulay’s articles.” What can be imagined more absurd than his keeping up an angry correspondence with Jeffrey about articles he has never read? Well, the next thing was that Jeffrey, who was about to give up the editorship, asked me if I would take it. I said I would gladly do so if they would remove the head-quarters of the *Review* from Edinburgh to London. Jeffrey wrote to him about it. He disapproved of it so strongly that the plan was given up. The truth was, that he felt that his power over the *Review* diminished as mine increased, and he saw that he would have very little indeed if I were editor.

“‘I then came into Parliament. I do not complain that he should have preferred Denman’s claims to mine, and that he should have blamed Lord Lansdowne for not considering him. I went to take my seat. As I turned from the table at which I had been taking the oath, he stood as near to me as you do now, and he cut me dead. We never spoke in the House excepting once, that I can remember, when a few words passed between us in the lobby. I have sat close to him when many

men, of whom I knew nothing, have introduced themselves to me to shake hands, and congratulate me after making a speech, and he has never said a single word. I know that it is jealousy, because I am not the first man whom he has used in this way. During the debate on the Catholic claims he was so enraged because Lord Plunkett had made a very splendid display, and because the Catholics had chosen Sir Francis Burdett instead of him to bring the bill forward, that he threw every difficulty in its way. Sir Francis once said to him, "Really, Mr. —, you are so jealous that it is impossible to act with you." I will never serve in an administration of which he is the head. On that I have most firmly made up my mind. I do not believe that it is in his nature to be a month in office without caballing against his colleagues.

"'He is, next to the King, the most popular man in England. There is no other man whose entrance into any town of the kingdom would be so certain to be with huzzaing and taking out of horses. At the same time he is in a very ticklish situation, for he has no real friends. Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, Mackintosh, all speak of him as I now do to you. I was talking of him to Sydney Smith the other day, and said that, great as I felt his faults to be, I must allow him a real desire to raise the lower orders and do good by education, and those methods upon which his heart has always been set. Sydney would not allow him this or any other merit. Now, if those who are called his friends feel toward him as they all do, angry and sore at his overbearing, arrogant, and neglectful conduct, when those reactions in public feeling, which must come, arrive, he will have nothing to return upon, no place of refuge, no band of such tried friends as Fox and Canning had, to support him. You will see that he will soon place himself in a false position before the public.' "

Lord Macaulay was a high-minded, honorable man, incapable of intentional misrepresentation or mean jealousy, but he was also, in an eminent degree, what Dr. Johnson liked, a "good hater," and the judgments of good haters are not, as a

rule, to be accepted without considerable deductions. Nevertheless, the above seems a substantially correct portraiture of the position Brougham occupied from 1831 to 1832. Idolized by the people, praised by the Press, the most powerful and the most popular Lord Chancellor who had sat on the Wool-sack since the time of Cardinal Wolsey, no one not behind the scenes of political life could for a moment have imagined how speedy and how complete would be his downfall. "Dedications," writes Lord Campbell, "attempting to describe his virtues, were showered down upon him by all classes, particularly by the clergy; strangers flocked to London from all parts of the kingdom to look at him; the Court of Chancery, generally a desert from its dulness, as often as he sat there was crowded to suffocation; when his carriage drew up in the streets a mob of admirers gathered round to see him get into it, cheering him as he passed by; and the Italian image-boys gave orders for grosses of Lord Brougham in plaster-of-Paris faster than they could be manufactured. In this palmy state he could not be accused of 'high-blown pride,' for he was good-humored and courteous and kind to everybody, and seemed to regret that he could not at all times enjoy social intercourse with old acquaintances on a footing of perfect equality." In the midst of all this popularity the bad qualities of his nature were making themselves painfully manifest to his colleagues and friends. It was found that he placed popular applause above the claims of friendship and truth, and that his burning and restless ambition too often blinded his sense of honor and justice. While storms of applause awaited him every time he drove to address a popular audience, he was listened to generally with impatience, and often with disgust, in the House of Lords; and in the Court of Chancery contrived to make himself extremely disliked by the members of the Bar at the very time when his praise as a law reformer was being echoed in every newspaper.

To discuss the varied fortunes of the Reform Bill, from the time of its introduction to its final passing by the House of Lords without a vote, on June 7, 1832, would lead us greatly

beyond our limits. Suffice it to say that, in popular estimation, to Lord Chancellor Brougham was chiefly attributed the great merit of having carried it through the Lords. From this period his popularity began to decline, partly through his own personal defects, and partly through the general disfavor with which his party began to be regarded. The Reform Bill had raised popular enthusiasm to its utmost height, and the inevitable relapse speedily followed. Those who expected that by the bill the political world would be entirely regenerated, that no jobbery, no wrangling for place, no selfish intriguing, no preferring of the sweets of office to the public good would ever be found in it any more, soon found out their mistake, and were disagreeably surprised to see that, in spite of all their sanguine prognostications, many rank abuses flourished as strongly in the Reform Parliament as in former ones. Disgusted because all their foolish hopes had not been realized, many shut their eyes to the really good and worthy measures that were being transacted by the Grey government, among which the Slave Emancipation Act, the near prospect of the passing of which soothed the closing days of William Wilberforce, deserves special attention. It need scarcely be said that, in carrying it through the House of Lords, Brougham took a prominent part, and powerfully aided it by his eloquence.

During the autumn recess of 1834 Earl Grey was entertained at a public banquet in Edinburgh, at which Lord Brougham and the Earl of Durham were present. It was a magnificent affair, over 2500 persons, it is said, being present from first to last; and Brougham delivered a vigorous and telling speech. "Fellow-citizens of Edinburgh," he said, "these hands are pure! In taking office, in holding office, in retaining office, I have sacrificed no feeling of a public nature, I have deserted no friend, I have abandoned no principle, I have forfeited no pledge, I have done no job, I have promoted no unworthy man, to the best of my knowledge; I have not abused the ear of my royal master, and I have not deserted the cause of the people." He then proceeded to speak against hasty reforms, and against



“being hurried faster and farther than sound reflection, calm deliberation, and statesman-like prudence entitle us to go.” This part of the speech was doubtless intended as a hit at Earl Durham, who was known to be a much more pronounced Reformer than Brougham, and who, having retired from the Grey Cabinet after the passing of the Reform Bill, had avoided the unpopularity which was overwhelming most of his former colleagues. As such Lord Durham seems to have taken it, saying with strong emphasis that “he, for one, regretted every hour which passed over the existence of recognized and unreformed abuses.” This remark was greeted with thundering cheers, the significance of which was not lost upon Brougham, whose whole manner showed his indignation and vexation.

But, however vexed he might be at the turn which the tide of popular opinion was taking, he could have little suspected that within a few months the time would come when he would have to quit his high position as Lord Chancellor and a prominent member of the government, never again to resume it. In November, 1834, the government of Lord Melbourne being enfeebled by the removal of Lord Althorpe to the House of Lords, the King made the change a pretence for getting rid of it, and sent for the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel to form a ministry. This led to one of the least creditable incidents of Brougham’s life. With a sad lack of dignity and decorum he wrote to Lord Lyndhurst, his prospective successor in the Chancellorship, offering to take his place as Chief Baron of the Exchequer under the Wellington ministry, without receiving any other salary than his ex-Chancellor’s retiring allowance of £5000 a year and another sum in name of expenses. Lord Lyndhurst referred the application to Sir Robert Peel, by whom it was rejected.

After a brief and weak existence, the Wellington ministry resigned on the 8th of April, 1835, and Lord Melbourne resumed office. Public attention was soon drawn to the fact that Brougham was no longer Chancellor, but Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and Chairman of the House of Lords, without

a seat in the Cabinet. "What," asks Earl Russell, "was the nature of the objections which prevented Lord Melbourne from offering to return the Great Seal into the hands of Lord Brougham? The objections came first from Lord Melbourne, and were frankly communicated by him to Lord Brougham. His faults were a recklessness of judgment, which hurried him beyond the bounds of prudence, an omnivorous appetite for praise, a perpetual interference in matters with which he had no direct concern, and, above all, a disregard of truth. His vast powers of mind were neutralized by a want of judgment, which prevented any party from placing entire confidence in him, and by a frequent forgetfulness of what he himself had done or said but a short time before. It was for this reason that, many weeks before the change of government, Lord Melbourne resolved not to offer the Great Seal to Lord Brougham. He told me his fixed resolution on this head many weeks before the dissolution of Sir Robert Peel's ministry. Observing as I did the characters of the two men, I thought Lord Melbourne justified in his decision, and I willingly stood by him in his difficulties."\* These remarks powerfully corroborate the opinion expressed of Brougham by Lord Macaulay, and help to explain the fact, unprecedented in English political history, "of a man of transcendent abilities, whose public services were of the most signal character, having, by common consent, disqualified himself for public employment."

On the 15th of January, 1836, the *Gazette* announced the appointment of Sir Charles Pepys as Lord Chancellor, under the title of Baron Cottenham. On the 4th February following, Brougham's connection with the ministry terminated, and Baron Cottenham took his seat on the Bench. Opinions will differ as to whether the Melbourne government acted justly to Brougham in thus discarding him. "In my opinion," says Lord Campbell, who was far from having a very exalted estimate of Brougham, "Brougham was atrociously ill-used on

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\* "Recollections and Suggestions," pp. 38-40.

this occasion. Considering his distinguished reputation, considering what he had done for the Liberal cause, considering his relations with the Melbourne government, I incline to think that at every risk they ought to have taken him back into the Cabinet. But sure I am that in the manner in which they finally threw him off they showed disingenuousness, cowardice, and ingratitude." This appears too harsh a judgment. We can scarcely believe that nearly every eminent Whig statesman should have agreed in regarding Brougham with suspicion and aversion without adequate ground for so doing.

Thus ingloriously, and with no general or widespread feeling of regret, did Brougham's career as a statesman come to a close. If, in 1831 or 1832, the Whig government had dispensed with his services, there can be little doubt but that it would speedily have been overwhelmed by a general torrent of popular indignation. In 1836, however, the people were content, without uttering a word of indignation or sorrow, to see their former hero degraded. The Press, once almost unanimous in his favor, was now almost unanimously against him. The *Times*, which had at one time lauded him to the skies, for several years rarely mentioned his name without an expression of contempt. With what bitter indignation Lord Brougham felt his position appears very clearly from his letters to Macvey Napier.\* There he shows his character in its worst light—overbearing, presumptuous, suspicious, jealous, and insolent.

Quitting the disagreeable theme of a great man's weaknesses and vices, we now retrace our steps to consider some of Lord Brougham's more prominent services as a champion of popular education. Perhaps his best and most enduring work in this direction was as the leader and prime mover of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. This society, one of the many symptoms of the desire for reform and reorganization prevalent among all classes at that time, was founded in 1826 by Lord Brougham and other gentlemen, comprising in their

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\* Published in the "Selected Correspondence of Macvey Napier."

number the leading statesmen, lawyers, and philanthropists of the day. Its aim was to gratify the growing thirst of the people for education and cheap literature. Commencing its operations with the humble task of publishing various almanacs, with a view to drive out of the field the ignorant and filthy trash which then circulated under that name, its operations gradually extended, till in July, 1833, the first number of the "Penny Encyclopædia," the most useful work undertaken by the society, appeared. The society had no pecuniary risk in their publications; "arrangements made with the publisher since the beginning of the society have gone upon the principle of leaving the committee, as far as possible, free from risk and unencumbered with commercial responsibility, but at the same time deriving a fair proportion of pecuniary advantage from the ultimate success of the undertaking." In other words, the society sold the copyright of the works issued under their name to the publisher, Charles Knight, for a sum sufficient to cover the disbursements to authors by the committee, which, after a certain number had been sold, received a royalty of so much per thousand copies. In several cases, as we shall afterward see, this arrangement proved anything but a profitable one to the publisher. Into the last and greatest enterprise of the society he, however, fortunately as it proved, could not afford to take part. The publication of a biographical dictionary of a fulness and completeness altogether unprecedented was commenced; but when the letter A was completed it was found, to the consternation of all concerned, that seven half-volumes had been filled, and a loss of £5000 incurred. The accomplished editor, Mr. George Long, than whom no one better qualified for the task was to be found in the three kingdoms, bitterly complained that the work was not patronized by those who, from their wealth and position, ought to have been the first to countenance such an undertaking. The society did not feel itself justified in spending more money upon such a profitless enterprise, and seized the opportunity thus afforded of bringing its operations to an end. "Its work," it was said,



“is now done, for its greatest object is achieved—fully, fairly, and permanently. The public is supplied with cheap and good literature to an extent which the most sanguine friends of improvement could not have hoped to witness.”

For the society, of which he was by far the most influential member, Brougham labored unweariedly both by tongue and pen. Repeatedly in the *Edinburgh Review* he placed its objects before the public, and warded off the attacks of its enemies. Charles Knight, who appears to have had what it must be confessed not very many had—a cordial affection for, as well as admiration of, Brougham—speaks rapturously of his unwearied energy and enthusiasm in advancing the cause of the society. In many respects the work done by it merits hearty approbation. The books it published were often by eminent writers, they were almost invariably accurate and trustworthy, and not a few of them may even yet be consulted with pleasure and satisfaction. They are entirely free from the vice which has marred the well-meant efforts of a good many caterers of literature for the people—none of them is “goody-goody,” and none bears the appearance of having been “written down” to suit the popular apprehension. Their main fault is, that the majority of them are too dry, and lacking in popular interest. A good many rather resemble students’ textbooks than literature for the people. Of the society’s numerous publications there are few that any one would think of reading for the sake of amusement. Now, as most turn to reading, not so much that they may be instructed, as for a means of recreation after the labors of the day, it is obvious that books addressed to the people should have the entertaining element mingled with the useful in larger proportions than it is in the publications of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.\*

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\* The treatises and other works of the society (writes Brougham in a note to his speech on laying the foundation-stone of the Liverpool Mechanics’ Institute) had an immense circulation: 40,000 of some were sold; of one, above 200,000 weekly.



His labors in the foundation and organization of Mechanics' Institutions were not the least important of Brougham's services in the cause of popular education, and did much to enhance his fame among the middle and lower classes. The merit of originating the idea of those useful institutions belongs to Professor Anderson, the founder of Anderson's College, Glasgow; the merit of fully carrying the idea into practical effect belongs to Dr. George Birkbeck, whose self-denying exertions in the cause it would be difficult to overrate. "These institutions," said Brougham, when laying the foundation-stone of the Liverpool Mechanics' Institute, in 1835, "have spread within the last ten or twelve years prodigiously over the country. But they did not originate ten or twelve years ago. Strict justice requires me to remind you that a much earlier date is to be taken as the origin of these useful establishments; for though the London Mechanics' Institution was established in 1824, principally through the efforts of its chief founder and most munificent patron, Dr. Birkbeck, he had twenty-four years before established the earliest real Mechanics' Institution in the city of Glasgow, where he first gave scientific lectures to humble artisans. Some have doubted whether he was the first that suggested the Institution of London; some have claimed to share with him the praise of executing that great design; but be it that he had coadjutors in planning, as it is certain he had in executing it, I care not, for he was only taking a leaf out of his own book, twenty-four years ago, which I have in my possession, printed at Glasgow in the year 1800, and in which there is a proposal of the first course of lectures on subjects of science which ever any man of science delivered to the mere men of art."\*

Among the many earnest coadjutors who seconded Birkbeck's efforts none was more untiring and strenuous than Brougham. He gave much sensible advice to those organizing such institutions, he contributed liberally to their funds, and

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\* Brougham's Speeches, vol. ii., p. 78.

he prepared several courses of lectures on political and other topics to be delivered in the various institutions throughout the country. "You are aware," he writes to Napier, in 1835, "of my sitting in the Lords five and often six days a week, and writing long judgments in each cause; besides which, I have a great deal to do in the Political Knowledge Society, which is preparing political lectures for the country, to be delivered, not printed. It is a plan I fell upon in 1825, and I wrote a course which has been (anonymously) delivered ever since in various quarters. Another, on Political Economy, has also been delivering, and we are now extending it. I am writing, and have nearly finished, the course on Government." It must be admitted that *Mechanics' Institutions* have not justified the high hopes which Brougham and some others entertained of them as agents of moral and intellectual regeneration. One reason for this, doubtless, was (as has been pointed out by Mr. John Morley) that the elementary education of the country was not then sufficiently advanced to supply a population ready to take advantage of education in the higher subjects. Another, and perhaps a still more potent reason, was that the original promoters of *Mechanics' Institutions* greatly over-estimated the popular appetite for hard, dry, scientific knowledge. The foolish and rose-colored opinion of many of them was, that mechanics, in their eager pursuit after information, would scorn the attractions of the tavern and the music-hall, and come in crowds to hear such topics as dynamics and hydrostatics discussed in a rigidly scientific form. Such sanguine anticipations were, of course, bound to be soon utterly dispelled; nevertheless, there can be no doubt that *Mechanics' Institutions* have done and are doing a very useful work, and that they have been powerful instruments for good, not only by their own immediate results, but by the impetus they have given to all other forms of popular education.

Were we to enumerate every service Brougham rendered to the cause of popular education, the list would be a long one. University College, London, of which he had the honor to be

appointed President, owes its existence mainly to him. In conjunction with the Marquis of Lansdowne and others, he founded the first infant-school established in London. In Parliament, whether in office or out of office, he unweariedly urged the claims of national education; and if the various bills he introduced on that subject often appear partial and inadequate, we must, in judging them, have regard to the very different state of public opinion on that topic then from what it is now. Many were openly opposed to national education; many more were utterly indifferent to it; few, like Brougham, were enthusiastic in its favor, and endeavored, however imperfectly, to have it carried out.

There is little to please or interest in the story of Brougham's career after his loss of power. He acted the part of a political Ishmaelite—his hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him. A furious attack he made in 1838 on his old opponent, Lord Durham, did not redound much to his honor. In the same year, however, he regained some of his lost popularity by appearing as the advocate of complete negro emancipation, by his opposition to the apprenticeship system.

On the 30th of August, 1839, a grand public banquet was given by the inhabitants of the Cinque Ports to the Duke of Wellington, at Dover. To Lord Brougham was assigned the task of proposing the health of the illustrious guest, which he did in a speech which, however well it may have been received by his auditors, appears eminently absurd to the reader. In it he took the opportunity of making one of those tirades against party common with him after his own party had cast him off. "Party," he said, "the spirit of faction, may do much; but it cannot so far bewilder the memory, and pervert the judgment, and quench the warmth that glows within us, and eradicate the sentiments which do our nature most honor, and dry up the kindly juices of the heart by its infernal chemistry, making it as parched as the very charcoal, and well-nigh as black," as to prevent them from paying due honor to the Duke's genius. He then proceeded, in the most inflated and exaggerated lan-

guage possible, to contrast the Duke with Cæsar, with Hannibal, and with his great rival, Napoleon. Whatever the Duke may have felt, he adapted himself to the occasion, and replied graciously to the swelling panegyric.

We now come to one of the most erratic incidents of Brougham's erratic career. On the evening of the 22d of October the following announcement appeared in the *Globe*: "We are sorry to hear that there is a report in town this evening, very generally credited, that Lord Brougham was killed yesterday by being thrown out of his carriage; and that Mr. Leader, M.P., who accompanied him, shared his fall, and is so dangerously injured that his life is despaired of." Next morning all the daily journals had notices of his lordship's death, some favorable, some, particularly the *Times* notice, very unfavorable. By-and-by the tidings were spread that the report of his death was a hoax promulgated by Brougham himself for the purpose of ascertaining the state of public feeling in regard to him. The *Examiner*, in an article by Mr. Fonblanque, the ablest journalist of his time, directly charged Brougham with being the author of the report, in the hope of enjoying during life the pleasure of perusing posthumous praise. The article was headed:

"THE BROUGHAM HOAX.

" 'And is old Double dead?'—*Master Shallow*.

" 'She went to the undertaker

To buy him a coffin,

And when she came back

The dog was laughing.'—*Mother Hubbard*."

The writer went on to observe that, while the report was believed, the general feeling was that *we could better have spared a better man*, and concluded with upbraiding the supposed defunct for having committed the crime of *suicide*. Lord Campbell says that, whether Brougham was cognizant of the hoax or not, he was much annoyed by the result of it; and that not only was he mortified by the great preponderance of abuse which it called forth, but he discovered, to his great surprise,

that he was generally suspected to be the author of it, and he knew the ridicule which he must have incurred by killing himself, and reading so many and such unfavorable characters of himself written when he was supposed to have gone to a better world. Campbell appears to exaggerate a little in speaking of "the great preponderance of abuse" which the report of Brougham's death called forth. "Nil de mortuis nisi bonum" is a maxim carried out to a perhaps excessive degree in Great Britain; and, when a great public light goes out, there is always, at first at least, a generous disposition shown to pass lightly over his faults and to magnify his virtues. It does not appear that the case was otherwise as regards Brougham. In a letter to Macvey Napier, dated October 27, 1839, he says: "A lie, daily repeated by two or three papers in London and one at Edinburgh, has deceived you all, namely, that the people of this country have no longer any care about me, and that my 'useless, worthless, and mischievous life' (such is their language these three years) was done for all purposes. Is it so? Look at the last week and tell. I assure you this room is filled with newspapers from all parts of the country; some crying *peccavi* for having ever attacked me, others thanking God they never had been seduced by the Treasury jobbers into such a course. Let this show the risk of men in a party giving up an old leader, because another happened for the hour to be invested with office. The Liberals having preferred the anti-reform, and Tory, and rat Melbourne to me, who never for an instant changed my course, have much to answer for." Whatever verdicts the newspapers may have pronounced on Brougham while the report of his death was credited, there is no doubt that the fact that he was believed to have given currency to the report himself still farther decreased his already greatly diminished popularity. On his re-appearance in the House of Lords he received a few malicious congratulations on his marvellous recovery, and his opponents secretly rejoiced over the vanity which had made him appear to the public in so ridiculous a light.



The year 1839 is farther remarkable in Brougham's history as being that in which he published his best work, the "Historical Sketches of Statesmen who flourished in the Time of George III."—a series of admirable cabinet portraits, mostly reprinted from the *Edinburgh Review*. Of some of them, on their first appearance, even Macaulay spoke very highly. In Brougham's lifetime his great reputation as a public man caused his writings to have a degree of popularity far above their real merits. The inevitable reaction has followed; and it may be questioned if some of the best of them do not deserve to be more generally read than they are. It would be a waste of space to give an exact enumeration of the innumerable pamphlets and little books which he put forth. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that he wrote *de omni scibili*, and in every department of literature. Even fiction was not excepted, for in 1844 he published a novel, "Albert Lunel," which, however, was immediately withdrawn from sale, so that during the author's lifetime copies were not to be had but for a fancy price, as much as five guineas having been paid for one. Since then a cheap edition has been issued, but it obtained no popularity, as it was found dull and tedious in the extreme. On the whole, Macaulay's judgment of Brougham as a literary man may be accepted as substantially correct. "Brougham," he writes, "does one thing well, two or three things indifferently, and a hundred things detestably. His Parliamentary speaking is admirable, his forensic speaking poor, his writings, at the very best, second-rate. As to his 'Hydrostatics,' his 'Political Philosophy,' his 'Equity Judgments,' his 'Translations from the Greek,' they are really below contempt."

Although a very rapid and careless writer, there is a masculine energy about Brougham's style which fits it admirably for grave disquisitions on the character of great public men, such as we find in the "Statesmen of the Time of George III." His other writings which seem to deserve mention are his "History of England under the House of Lancaster," and his "Men of Letters of the Time of George III." The former, notwith-

standing recent researches, may still be consulted with advantage on constitutional points, and is distinguished throughout by a judicious and impartial tone. The latter is of more interest as illustrating certain features of Brougham's character than for its intrinsic merits. With the exception of Robertson, who is over-estimated, all the characters are dealt with in a far from generous spirit, and have their faults brought prominently forward. Especially is this true in the case of Dr. Johnson, Brougham's sketch of whom is, perhaps, the least laudatory in existence. On every circumstance in Johnson's life which admits of a favorable or of an unfavorable construction, an unfavorable construction is almost invariably put. For example, writing of Dr. Johnson's acquaintance with Savage, he says: "Above all, have we a right to complain that the associate of Savage, the companion of his debauches, should have presumed to insult men of such pure minds as David Hume and Adam Smith—rudely refusing to bear them company but for an instant, merely because he regarded the sceptical opinions of the one with horror, and could not forgive the other for being his friend?" Of Johnson's famous letter to Lord Chesterfield he writes: "The letter which he wrote appears to have been treated with indifference, if not with contempt, by the noble Secretary of State; for he showed it to any one that asked to see it, and let it lie on his table open, that all might read it who pleased. The followers of Dr. Johnson quote this as a proof of his dissimulation—possibly he overdid it; but they should recollect how little any one was likely to be severely hurt by such a composition, when he could with truth mention, even if he should not choose to do so, that he had given the writer ten pounds without giving him the least offence." Many more passages of the nature of the foregoing might be cited, all of which, we think, could be very easily refuted. Were a biographer to arise who should treat Brougham as he treated Johnson, there are few even of the best acts of his life which would be passed over altogether without censure.

In 1844 the Law Amendment Society came into existence. Of it Brougham was the most active member, and did good work in suggesting measures of law reform and in reducing them to a practical shape. Scarcely a session passed in which he did not bring forward in the House of Lords some bills having legislative reform for their object. In 1845, for example, he introduced no fewer than nine connected with this subject, of which, however, six made no progress. His conduct in Parliament with reference to general topics was unsteady. After having repeatedly addressed the House of Lords in favor of the repeal of the Corn-laws, he, to everybody's astonishment, in 1846, when the measure was on the eve of passing, rose and vehemently abused the Anti-Corn-law League, declaring that it was unconstitutional and almost illegal; and that he never had yielded, and never would yield, to any pressure from without. According to newspaper morals, said he, no man was to deprecate the employment of unconstitutional means, if they chanced to serve a good purpose. When reminded that the Reform Bill and Catholic Emancipation had owed much to popular enthusiasm out-of-doors, he refused to credit it, and said they had been passed by the pure force of eloquence and reason. Not the least singular feature of Brougham's political life was, that in spite of all his tergiversations and rapid changes of opinion, he claimed for himself the praise of strict consistency. In doing so, he wisely confined himself to generalities, or only mentioned such things as he had really been consistent in, and passed over those where his inconsistency had been glaring without either comment or explanation. "The fact is undeniable," he said, in a speech on the administration of justice in Ireland, "that upon all great questions which divide men's opinions I have ever since 1810, when I entered Parliament at an early age, been fortunate enough to hold precisely the same course throughout this long interval of time, without any exception or variation whatever. I have consistently supported Reform—the abolition of the slave-trade and slavery—the Catholic question—the reduction

of expenditure—the resistance of oppression—the extirpation of abuses—the reformation of the law—the limitation of the executive power. Moreover, I have uniformly adhered to one political party; and if, at the end of this long period, I have found myself under the painful necessity of separating from my former political friends, it has been not on personal but public grounds: it has been—it has notoriously been—not because I changed, but because they have changed their course.”

The remaining incidents in Brougham’s life may be very lightly passed over. In 1848, to the wonder and amusement of everybody, he proposed to become a citizen of the French Republic, which had been hastily proclaimed by a provisional government, after the flight of Louis Philippe. In order to his being qualified for a member of the Assembly, Lord Brougham considered that nothing was necessary but that he should get himself naturalized as a citizen of France. For this purpose he wrote a letter to the Mayor of Cannes, announcing his intention of standing as one of the candidates for the department of the Var. He then wrote to the Minister of Justice, M. Cremieux, saying that the Mayor of Cannes would forward the necessary certificates to him, and that he was desirous of having the act of naturalization passed as soon as possible. M. Cremieux then wrote to him, warning him of the consequences that would ensue if he succeeded in his aspirations. “If,” he said, “you become a French citizen, you cease to be Lord Brougham. You lose in an instant all your noble titles, all the privileges, all the advantages, of whatever nature they may be, which you hold either from your quality of Englishman, or from the rights which the laws and customs of your country have conferred upon you, and which cannot be reconciled with our laws of equality among all citizens. I certainly imagine,” he went on to say, “that the late Lord Chancellor of England knows the necessary consequences of so important a step; but it is the duty of the Minister of Justice of the French Republic to warn him of it officially. When you shall have made a demand including these declarations, it will be immediately ex-



amined." Thus Lord Brougham's project collapsed amid the derisive laughter of thousands in England and France.

In 1850 Brougham stood forth as the defender of the aristocracy. A report having been spread that the place at the Board of Green Cloth vacant by the death of Sir Thomas Marable was not to be filled up, it greatly excited his ire. "If any person," said he, "should have said—as was said to his late lamented Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, by whom it was received with the reprobation which the phantasy, the foreign phantasy, deserved—that the time had come for lowering the English aristocracy; if any one should have had the folly, the presumption so to speak, whoever they might be, they must know now that Parliament is resolved *not* to lower the English aristocracy. And the English aristocracy would be lowered, if such things were allowed to pass as he knew were now passing—namely, that a lady of the highest rank, connected with families of dukes and marquises by the nearest ties, was reduced to the humiliating necessity of advertising for necessary support." In spite of his defence of the aristocracy, Lord Brougham was at no time a popular member of the House of Lords, where his brusque manner suited ill with the dignified demeanor of the place. An extreme instance of his want of regard for the feelings of others has often been related. On one occasion, while Brougham was speaking to a thin House, the Dukes of Wellington and Cumberland were sitting close to each other, conversing in a low tone of voice. Brougham in his speech took occasion to remark that the epithet "illustrious" was sometimes used in a conventional sense, implying no real merit or eminence in the person so designated. "For instance," he said, looking at the two dukes, "the Duke of Cumberland is illustrious by courtesy only, but the Duke of Wellington by his character and services." This remark, not unnaturally, excited great astonishment in the House, and made the Duke of Cumberland exceedingly indignant. "Why," he asked, "had he, who had taken no part in the discussion, who was not even listening to it, been dragged



into it in that unseemly manner?" Brougham coolly replied "that it had suddenly occurred to him that his royal highness and the Duke of Wellington afforded an apt illustration of the truth he was endeavoring to enforce—that there was a vast and essential difference between individuals illustrious 'by courtesy' and those who were illustrious by achievements and success." This answer, as may be imagined, did not do much to mend matters.

In 1857 Lord Brougham took the lead in establishing the Social Science Association—a body the annual reunions of which can scarcely be said to realize the sanguine anticipations of its original projectors. Its first annual meeting was held at Birmingham, in October, 1857, under the presidency of Lord Brougham, and henceforth most of his public appearances and principal speeches were made in connection with it. In 1859 he was elected Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh by a large majority over the Duke of Buccleuch; and in the autumn of the same year he was entertained at a banquet in the Music Hall of that town, where he was honored by a numerous and splendid assemblage. In connection with the public honors paid to Brougham, we should not omit to say that he obtained the signal distinction of being appointed a member of the Institute of France, in the proceedings of which he did not fail to take part whenever he visited France.

In 1863 Lord Brougham again visited his native town, as President of the Social Science Association, and delivered various speeches, which possessed not a little of his old fire and energy. During the meetings of the Association the taunts of some of the American newspapers, that he undervalued the emancipation of the slave, called forth from him an eloquent reply, containing a vigorous defence of his lukewarmness in the cause of the North in the great American conflict. "I," he exclaimed, "undervalue the emancipation of the slave! Why, have all the advocates of slave emancipation done half so much for the liberation of the slave and the abolition of slavery as I myself have done? At the very beginning of my

Parliamentary life it was signalized by the act of 1811, the one which, of all the many acts I have had a hand in passing, gave me the most real satisfaction—namely, the act abolishing the slave-trade.”

During the last thirty years of his life Brougham spent much of his time at his villa at Cannes, where he was much liked and respected. While residing in England he delighted to exercise a bounteous hospitality at his beautiful house in Westmoreland. Harriet Martineau, in her spiteful “Autobiography,” gives what appears, from other accounts, to be a grossly unjust account of Brougham’s manner and conversation in society. “He watched me,” she says, “intently and incessantly when I was conversing with anybody else. For my part, I liked to watch him when he was conversing with gentlemen, and his mind and its manifestations really came out. This was never the case, as far as my observation went, when he talked with ladies. I believe I have never met with more than three men in the whole course of my experience who talked with women in a perfectly natural manner—that is, precisely as they talked with men; but the difference in Brougham’s case was so great as to be disagreeable. He knew many cultivated and intellectual women, but this seemed to be of no effect. If not able to assume with them his ordinary manner toward silly women, he was awkward and at a loss. This was by no means agreeable, though the sin of his bad manners must be laid at the door of the vain women who discarded their ladyhood for his sake, went miles to see him, were early on platforms where he was to be, and admitted him to very broad flirtations. He had pretty nearly settled his own business, in regard to conversation with ladies, before two more years were over. His swearing became so incessant, and the occasional indecency of his talk so insufferable, that I have seen even coquettes and adorers turn pale, and the lady of the house tell her husband that she could not undergo another dinner-party with Lord Brougham for guest.” We do not hesitate to declare that at least far the greater part of the above is a vile and malignant scandal.

In his latter years his conversation was somewhat variable and uncertain; fits of silence alternated with bursts of animated talk; but in his prime nobody could be a more agreeable companion than Brougham when in the society of those he liked. "He was capable," writes Sir Denis Le Marchant, "of investing the least attractive subjects with interest. My friend, the late Viscountess Eversley (Mr. Whitbread's youngest daughter), recollected a group of fashionable ladies listening one morning at Southhill, with breathless attention, to his account of the habits of bees, which he made as charming as a fairy tale. He was also a first-rate mimic; so that John Kemble, being asked what he thought of him, answered, 'If I could get him on the boards for a season, it would make my fortune.' Even Mr. Rogers, though not addicted to praise, observed, as Mr. Brougham was stepping into his chaise at the door of Southhill, 'There go Demosthenes, Bacon, and George Selwyn all in the same chaise.'"

In several points Lord Brougham's private character was such as to merit high praise. Money he was neither careful to get nor to keep; he loved power for its own sake, not for the good things which it brings in its train. When he attained to high place, so far was he from casting off his old associates that he bestowed on them almost too lavish patronage. But his generosity was not confined to his own immediate circle of acquaintances. To the best of his ability, wherever he saw merit he sought it out and rewarded it.

The peacefulness of Brougham's end was in signal contrast to the turmoil and bustle of his life. At Cannes, on the night between the 7th and 8th of May, 1868, he passed quietly away in his sleep. After reviewing his career, marred though it was by various vices and follies, we feel inclined to exclaim, in the noble and merciful language of Johnson about Goldsmith, "But let not his frailties be remembered. He was a very great man."



## CHEAP LITERATURE.

*CONSTABLE, CHAMBERS, KNIGHT, AND CASSELL.*

ON a certain day in May, 1825 (so we read in Lockhart's "Life of Scott"), Archibald Constable, prince of the Edinburgh booksellers, and a man who by his energy and enterprise had well earned his surname of "The Crafty," paid a visit to Sir Walter Scott, at Abbotsford. Of all the many bold schemes he had entered on, the one he was now meditating was the boldest and most revolutionary. At the outset he startled Scott, and Lockhart and Ballantyne, who were present, by saying, "Literary genius may or may not have done its best; but printing and bookselling, as instruments of entertaining and enlightening mankind, and, of course, for making money, are as yet in mere infancy. Yes, the trade are in their cradle." Scott eyed "The Crafty" with astonishment; Ballantyne regarded him with solemn stare. Thereupon Constable sucked in fresh inspiration, and proceeded to say, that wild as they might think his plans, they had been suggested by, and were in fact mainly grounded on, a sufficiently prosaic authority—namely, the annual schedule of assessed taxes, a copy of which he drew from his pocket and substituted for his *D'Oyley*. It was copiously diversified, text and margin, by figures and calculations in his own handwriting, which, says Lockhart, "I for one might have regarded with less reverence had I known at the time this great arithmetician's rooted aversion and contempt for all examination of his own balance-sheet."

When Constable went on to expound his plan it appeared very excellent and ingenious. He had taken vast pains to fill

in the number of persons who might fairly be supposed to pay the taxes for each separate article of luxury; and his conclusion was, that the immense majority of British families endowed with liberal fortunes had never yet conceived the remotest idea that their domestic arrangements were incomplete unless they expended some considerable sum annually upon the purchase of books. "Take," he said, "this one absurd and contemptible item of the tax upon hair-powder; the use of it is almost entirely gone out of fashion. Bating a few parsons' and lawyers' wigs, it may be said that hair-powder is confined to *funkeys*, and, indeed, to the livery servants of great and splendid houses exclusively; nay, in many even of these it is already quite laid aside. Nevertheless, for each head that is thus vilified in Great Britain a guinea is paid yearly to the Exchequer; and the taxes in that schedule are an army, compared to the purchasers of even the best and most popular books." He went on, Lockhart proceeds to say, in the same vein about armorial bearings, hunters, racers, and four-wheeled carriages; and, having demonstrated that hundreds of thousands in this magnificent country held, as necessary to their personal comfort and the maintenance of decent station, articles upon articles of costly elegance, of which their forefathers never dreamed, said that, on the whole, however usual it was to talk of the extended scale of literary transactions in modern days, our self-love never deceived us more grossly than when we fancied our notions in the matter of books had advanced in at all a corresponding proportion. "On the contrary," cried Constable, "I am satisfied that the demand for Shakspeare's plays, contemptible as we hold it to have been, in the time of Elizabeth and James, was more creditable to the classes who really indulged in any sort of elegance then, than the sale of 'Childe Harold' or 'Waverley,' triumphantly as people talk, is to the alleged expansion of taste and intelligence in this nineteenth century."

Here Scott interposed that he had at that moment a large valley, crowded with handsome houses, under his view, and yet





ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
LIBRARY

he much doubted whether any laird within ten miles spent ten pounds per annum on the literature of the day—which he, of course, distinguished from its periodical press. “No,” said Constable, “there is no market among them that is worth one’s while thinking about. They are contented with a review or a magazine, or at best with a paltry subscription to some circulating library forty miles off. But if I live for half a dozen years, I’ll make it as impossible that there should not be a good library in every decent house in Britain as that the shepherd’s ingle-nook should want the *salt-poke*. Ay, and what’s that?” he continued, warming and puffing. “Why should the ingle-nook itself want a shelf for *the novels*?” “I see your drift, my man,” said Scott; “you’re for being like Billy Pitt in Gilray’s print—you want to get into the salt-box yourself.” “Yes,” he responded. “I have hitherto been thinking only of the wax-lights, but before I’m a twelvemonth older I shall have my hand on the tallow.” “Troth,” said Scott, “you are indeed likely to be

“‘The great Napoleon of the realms of *print*.’”

“If you outlive me,” replied Constable, with a regal smile, “I bespeak that line for my tombstone; but in the mean time may I presume to ask you to be my right-hand man when I open my campaign of Marengo? I have now settled my outline of operations—a three-shilling or half-crown volume every month, which must and shall sell, not by thousands or tens of thousands, but by hundreds of thousands—ay, by millions! Twelve volumes in the year, a half-penny of profit upon every copy of which will make me richer than the possession of all the copyrights of all the quartos that ever were or will be hot-pressed—twelve volumes, so good that millions must wish to have them, and so cheap that every butcher’s callant may have them, if he pleases to let me tax him sixpence a week.”

Scott instantly saw that the scheme was a feasible one. “Your plan,” he said, “cannot fail, provided the books are really good; but you must not start until you have not only

leading columns, but depth upon depth of reserve in thorough order. I am willing to do my part in this grand enterprise. Often of late have I felt that the vein of fiction is nearly worked out; often, as you all know, have I been thinking of turning my hand to history. I am of opinion that historical writing has no more been adapted to the demands of the increasing circles among which literature does not already find its way, than you allege as to the shape and price of books in general. What say you to taking the field with a life of the *other* Napoleon?"

"The reader," Lockhart concludes, "does not need to be told that the series of cheap volumes, subsequently issued under the title of 'Constable's Miscellany,' was the scheme on which this great bookseller was brooding. Before he left Abbotsford it was arranged that the first number of this collection should consist of one-half of 'Waverley;' the second of a 'Life of Napoleon Bonaparte, by the author of "Waverley;"' that this life should be comprised in four of these numbers; and that until the whole series of his novels should have been issued—a volume every second month in this new and uncostly form—he should keep the Ballantyne press going with a series of historical works, to be issued on the alternate months. Such were, as far as Scott was concerned, the first outlines of a daring plan never destined to be carried into execution on the gigantic scale or with the grand appliances which the projector contemplated, but destined, nevertheless, to lead the way in one of the greatest revolutions that literary history will ever have to record—a revolution not the less sure to be completed, though as yet, after the lapse of twelve years, we see only its beginnings."

Constable's failure prevented his plan from being carried out exactly as he contemplated; and it may be questioned if it would have been such a gigantic success as he anticipated, even if he had been able to do so. Nevertheless, to him belongs the credit of having been the first to perceive that there was, among the middle and lower classes, a reading public sufficient-

ly large to justify a publisher in placing works before it at so low a price that only a very large sale would remunerate him. The shabby-looking little green volumes of "Constable's Miscellany"\* would not now be thought low-priced at three shillings and sixpence, but at the time of their appearance they were hailed as marvels of cheapness, and paved the way for a literature for the people of such enormous dimensions as to far surpass even the sanguine dreams of Constable.

Two names which stand out very prominently as leaders in the movement for providing literature for the people are those of William and Robert Chambers. Robert, the more gifted brother, was born at Peebles, on the 10th of July, 1802, two years later than William. Though both the lads employed their time well while at school, Robert, who was prevented by lameness from indulging in the rude sports of his companions, took to books with greater eagerness and greater benefit than his brother. It may be imagined that the little town of Peebles did not afford great educational facilities; however, they were to be had very cheaply, such as they were. William Chambers says that his entire education, which terminated when he was thirteen years old, cost, books included, somewhere about six pounds; while Robert declares "that the good education which has enabled me to address so much literature, of whatever value, to the public during the last forty-five years, never cost my parents so much as five pounds."

But, if their school instruction was somewhat meagre and unsatisfactory, their opportunities for self-education were wonderfully good, and were thoroughly taken advantage of. The singing of old ballads and the telling of old legendary stories by a kind old female relative both entertained and instructed them; while they derived a high degree of enjoyment from hearing Josephus read by Tam Fleck, a "dichty chield," who, not having been particularly steady at his legitimate employ-

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\* It may be mentioned that these are said to be the first volumes issued bound entirely in cloth.



ment, struck out a sort of profession by going about in the evenings with an old copy of L'Estrange's translation of Josephus, which he read as the current news. "Well, Tam, what's the news the night?" one of his friends would ask, as he entered with his inseparable companion under his arm. "Bad news, bad news," replied Tam; "Titus has just begun to besiege Jerusalem—it's gaun to be a terrible business." Fortunately for the boys, their father had a considerable taste for literature, and was a supporter of a very modest circulating library managed by Alexander Elder, the only bookseller Peebles could boast of. Thus, by the time they were nine or ten years old, Robert and his brother had read a considerable number of the classics of English literature; were familiar with the comicalities of Gulliver, Don Quixote, and Peregrine Pickle; had dipped into the poetry of Pope and Goldsmith; and indulged their romantic tendencies by books of travel and adventure. When about eleven years old, Robert one day came across a copy of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," deposited in an old chest in a lumber-garret. From that time for weeks all his leisure was spent beside the chest. "It was," he writes, "a new world to me. I felt a profound thankfulness that such a convenient collection of human knowledge existed, and that here it was spread out like a well-furnished table before me. What the gift of a whole toy-shop would have been to most children this book was to me. I plunged into it. I roamed through it like a bee. I hardly could be patient enough to read any one article, while so many others remained to be looked into. In that on astronomy the constitution of the material universe was all at once revealed to me. Henceforth I knew—what no other boy in the town then dreamed of—that there were infinite numbers of worlds besides our own, which was by comparison a very insignificant one. From the zoological articles I gathered that the animals, familiar and otherwise, were all classified into a system through which some faint traces of a plan were discernible. Geography, of which not the slightest elements were then imparted at school, here came before me

in numberless articles and maps, expanding my narrow village world to one embracing the uttermost ends of the earth. I pitied my companions who remained ignorant of what became to me familiar knowledge. Some articles were splendidly attractive to the imagination—for example, that entitled "Aerostation," which illustrated all that had been done in the way of aerial travelling from Montgolfier downward. Another paper interested me much—that descriptive of the inquiries of Dr. Saussure regarding the constitution and movement of glaciers. The biographical articles, introducing to me the great men who had laid up these stores of knowledge, or otherwise affected the destinies of their species, were devoured in rapid succession. What a year that was to me, not merely in intellectual enjoyment, but in mental formation!"

We now come to the time which the Chamberses, half in jest, half in sorrow, used, after they had emerged from it, to call the "Dark Ages." Their father, James Chambers, a man who took things too easily, and offered a too credulous ear to everybody with a plausible story, had foolishly given credit to many of the French prisoners then at Peebles, on the strength of their fervid promises that, should they ever return to their own country, they would have pleasure in discharging their debts. They got home at the peace in 1814, but none of them ever paid a farthing. A cotton-weaver by trade, James Chambers was by this time beginning to suffer considerably by the introduction of hand-weaving looms, and the loss incurred by the French soldiers brought his affairs to a crisis. He became bankrupt, and, after struggling in Peebles for a year or two after the catastrophe, removed to Edinburgh in December, 1813. There he resumed business as a commission-agent for the Glasgow cotton manufacturers; but, as this trade had been long declining, it afforded him but a meagre independence.

Here, for a time, the fortunes of the two brothers were separate. William being now a lad of fourteen, it was considered that it was time he should get to work. As his tastes lay in the direction of books, he was ambitious of being apprenticed

to a bookseller. After sundry disappointments, his wishes were gratified by his being appointed apprentice to a Mr. John Sutherland, bookseller, Calton Street. In this situation his duties were heavy and his pay small. For the modest recompense of four shillings a week he had to light the fire, take off and put on the shutters, cleanse and prepare the oil-lamps, sweep and dust the shop, and go all the errands. When he had nothing else to do (so his master told him), he was to stand behind the counter and help in any way that was wanted. It would, he added, be quite contrary to rule, for him ever to sit down or to put off time reading. Nor did his long list of duties end here. In addition to his trade as a bookseller, Sutherland kept a circulating library, and also acted as an agent for the State Lottery. Accordingly, besides a multitude of errands with parcels of books and stationery, his apprentice was charged with the delivery of great quantities of letters puffing the successive lotteries.

From the outset of his apprenticeship William Chambers determined to depend entirely upon his own resources, and at all hazards to make the weekly four shillings serve for everything. For one shilling and sixpence a week he procured lodgings in the top story of a house in the West Port. After repeated experiments, he managed to make an outlay of one shilling and ninepence suffice for the week's food. Thus he had ninepence left over for miscellaneous expenses, of which shoes constituted the principal item. "On no occasion," he says, "did I look to my parents for the slightest pecuniary subsidy." From friends or relations he neither looked for nor received the slightest assistance. Perhaps he is right in thinking that it was better for him that he did not. "To be always pining to be noticed, brought forward, taken by the hand, and done for," he says, "is anything but wise or manly. There are, doubtless, instances where the deserving are entitled to such assistance as can be safely or conveniently extended toward them. But in too many cases the visionary expectation of aid paralyzes exertion, and consumes valuable time that

might very properly be devoted to individual effort. At any rate, I do not doubt that I should have suffered injury at this critical period by getting entangled with fine people, invited to fine houses, and led to mix in fine evening parties. Proceedings of that seductive kind would have been distinctly at variance with my condition."

In spite of the constant hard work to which he was subjected, the stout-hearted boy found time for self-improvement. In the summer mornings he would rise at five o'clock, and have a spell at reading until it was time for him to commence his duties. In this way he made some progress in French, and acquired a considerable acquaintance with such solid books as Smith's "Wealth of Nations," Locke's "Human Understanding," Paley's "Moral Philosophy," and Blair's "Belles-Lettres." The leading facts and theories contained in these he fixed in his memory by entering them in a note-book kept for the purpose. By a fortunate chance he at length found out a way of improving his mind and economizing money at the same time. A baker, passionately fond of reading, but without leisure to gratify his taste for it, proposed to him that if he would go very early—say at five o'clock in the morning—and read aloud to him and his two sons while they were preparing their batch, he should be regularly rewarded for his trouble with a penny roll drawn from the oven. This munificent offer was thankfully accepted, and henceforth regularly at five o'clock in the morning the youth made his way to the baker's shop, and, having entertained him by reading for two and a half hours, duly received the promised roll.

Leaving William assiduously toiling on through his dreary apprenticeship, we turn to trace the fortunes of Robert Chambers. His delicate health and his love of reading induced his parents to cherish the hope that he might be educated for the Church. Left for a time in Peebles to pursue his studies at the Grammar-school, he was finally brought to Edinburgh, and placed under the tuition of Mr. Benjamin Mackay, master of a noted classical academy there. Of that school he soon became



one of the best scholars, and acquired a sufficient degree of skill in Latin to read Horace and Virgil with pleasure. By-and-by the constantly increasing pecuniary embarrassments of his father made it painfully evident that he must give up all hope of receiving a University education. At this time his prospects were very clouded indeed. As he himself said, "I was now in the miserable situation of a youth between fifteen and sixteen who, having passed the proper period without acquiring the groundwork of a profession, is totally *hors de combat*, and has the prospect of evermore continuing so."

While in this wretched condition his brother suggested to him that, as better could not be, he should, though in the humblest possible style, begin the business of a bookseller. After due consideration the scheme was agreed to; all the old books belonging to the family and all his old school-books were searched out, two or three pocket Bibles were added, and with this slender stock Robert Chambers, in 1816, began bookselling in a shop in Leith Walk, for which he paid the modest yearly rent of six pounds. Writing to Hugh Miller in 1851, Robert Chambers describes as follows his bitter early experiences: "I passed through some years of the direst hardship, not the least evil being a state of feeling quite unnatural in youth—a stern and burning defiance of a social world in which we were harshly and coldly treated by former friends, differing only in external respects from ourselves. In your life there is one crisis where, I think, your experience must have been somewhat like mine: it is the brief period at Inverness. Some of your expressions there bring all my own early feelings again to life. A disparity between the internal consciousness of powers and accomplishments and the external ostensible aspect, led in me to the very same wrong methods of setting myself forward as in you. There, of course, I meet you in warm sympathy. I have sometimes thought of describing my bitter, painful youth to the world, as something in which it might read a lesson; but the retrospect is still too distressing. I screen it from my mental eye. The one grand fact it has impressed is the very



small amount of brotherly assistance there is for the unfortunate in this world. . . . Till I proved that I could help myself, no friend came to me. Uncles, cousins, etc., in good positions in life—some of them stoops of kirks, by-the-bye—not one offered or seemed inclined to give the smallest assistance. The consequent defiant, self-relying spirit in which, at sixteen, I set out as a bookseller, with only my own small collection of books as a stock—not worth more than two pounds, I believe—led to my being quickly independent of all aid; but it has not been all a gain, for I am now sensible that my spirit of self-reliance too often manifested itself in an unsocial, unamiable light, while my recollections of ‘honest poverty’ may have made me too eager to attain and secure worldly prosperity.”

In 1819 the apprenticeship of William Chambers came to an end. His ambition had been excited by reading the “Autobiography” of James Lackington, who says that he began business as a bookseller in 1774, the whole of his stock of old books, laid out on a stall, not amounting to five pounds in value; that in 1792, when he retired into private life, the profits of his business amounted to £5000 a year; and that he had realized all he possessed by “*small profits, bound by industry, and clasped by economy.*” Emulous to tread in Lackington’s footsteps, he declined the offer of his old master to retain his services as assistant, and determined, like Robert, to commence business on his own account. But, with the exception of five shillings, he was totally destitute of pecuniary resources, and, unless by encroaching on Robert’s slender savings, which he was particularly unwilling to do, he could see no way of getting a sufficient supply of books with which to start. A fortunate chance relieved him from anxiety on this score. The agent of Thomas Tegg, of London, then well known as a publisher of popular editions of the great English classical authors, and as the leading dealer in the “remainder” trade, came to Edinburgh to hold a trade-sale. He required some one acquainted with the handling and arranging of books to assist him, and, hearing of William Chambers, engaged him

for this purpose. After the sale was over he began questioning the youth as to his plans. He replied that he was about to begin business, but that he had no money; if he had, he added, he should take the opportunity of buying a few of his specimens, for he thought he could sell them to advantage. "Well," replied the agent, "I like that frankness. You seem an honest lad, and have been useful to me; so do not let the want of money trouble you. Select, if you please, ten pounds' worth of my samples, and I will let you have the usual credit." The offer was readily accepted, and, with a not unattractive if somewhat small stock, William Chambers commenced business as a bookseller in Leith Walk, as his brother had done before him.

When the weather was bad little trade was done at his stall, and he employed the unwelcome leisure in copying poems and prose trifles in elegant handwriting, in the hope of selling them for albums. The few shillings he gained in this way bore no proportion to the amount of labor the penmanship cost him; but these little pieces helped to bring him into notice, and were sometimes instrumental in procuring him large orders for books. Turning his thoughts toward literature, he produced a small volume purporting to give an account of David Ritchie, the original of the Black Dwarf. This was commercially a success, and led him to the conclusion that if he could print as well as write his own productions, he might both add to his means and find a profitable way of turning to account his leisure time. He accordingly purchased a very primitive printing-press, with types, etc., for three pounds, and with it slowly and laboriously executed a number of trifling jobs, among which the most important was a pocket-edition of the Songs of Burns.

As his business improved he got a better printing apparatus, and, along with Robert, who was meeting with success as a bookseller, started, in 1821, a periodical under the title of the *Kaleidoscope, or Edinburgh Literary Amusement*. Its size was sixteen pages octavo, its price was threepence, and it was issued at intervals of a fortnight. It was almost entirely written by

Robert, who had a strong natural bent toward literature, which he improved to the utmost of his ability. Though it sold pretty well, it never did more than pay its expenses, and was discontinued in a few months.

The two brothers had now attained sufficient success to justify them in quitting their humble stalls in Leith Walk. In 1822 Robert removed to a shop in India Place; and, in 1823, William secured more commodious premises in Broughton Street. In 1822 Robert wrote a small volume, "*Illustrations of the Author of 'Waverley,'*" an attempt to identify the scenes and characters of the great novelist. This work, of which William was the printer—though, of course, not always very accurate—attained a considerable degree of celebrity, and was the means of bringing the young author prominently before the public. Scott, to whom he had already become known by presenting to him, through Constable, a transcript of the songs in the "*Lady of the Lake,*" executed in a beautiful style of calligraphy, was pleased with the book, and wrote of him in his diary as "a clever young fellow, but spoils himself by too much haste." The "*Illustrations*" was followed, in 1824, by a larger and more important work, the "*Traditions of Edinburgh,*" in two volumes, of which his brother was the printer and publisher. It was, as it deserved to be, a great success, and procured for its author the friendship and countenance of many of the principal inhabitants of the city. Robert Chambers was not one of those whom modesty and diffidence deter from pushing their way. In an amusing letter to a friend, he says: "You may depend upon a copy of the '*Traditions of Edinburgh,*' and a review of them as soon as they are ready. I am busy just now in writing reviews of them myself for the various works I can get them put into, being now come to a resolution that an author always undertakes his own business best, and is, indeed, the only person capable of doing his work justice. I stood too much on punctilio in my maiden work, the '*Illustrations,*' and left the reviewing of it to fellows who knew nothing about the subject, at least who had not yet thought of it half

so much as I had, who was quite *au fait* with the whole matter."

From this period a series of works appeared from Robert's facile pen in rapid succession. To help the fund raised in behalf of the sufferers by a great fire which occurred in Edinburgh in 1824, he wrote an account of the chief "Fires which have Occurred in Edinburgh since the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century." It sold well, and so far served its purpose. In 1825 he issued "Walks in Edinburgh," a sort of antiquarian guide-book to the city. A more important work, "The Popular Rhymes of Scotland," to which Sir Walter Scott made frequent contributions, appeared in 1826. "Reared," wrote Robert Chambers, in the preface to the third edition of this work, "among friends to whom popular poetry furnished a daily enjoyment, and led by a tendency of my own mind to delight in whatever is quaint, whimsical, and old, I formed the wish, at an early period of life, to complete, as I considered it, the collection of traditionary verse of Scotland, by gathering together and publishing all that remained of a multitude of rhymes and short snatches of verse, applicable to places, families, natural objects, amusements, etc., wherewith, not less than by song and ballad, the cottage fireside was amused in days gone by, while yet printed books were only familiar to comparatively few. This task was executed as well as circumstances would permit, and a portion of the 'Popular Rhymes of Scotland' was published in 1826. Other objects have since occupied me, generally of a grave kind; yet, amid them all, I have never lost my wish to complete the publication of these relics of the old *natural literature* of my native country." To the third edition is appended a selection from Robert Chambers's poems, some of which prove (what certainly no one would infer from the specimens of his verse given in his "Memoir") that he possessed a real, though slender, vein of poetical genius. A ballad, "Young Randal," originally published in 1827, is particularly beautiful and touching. In 1826 also appeared his "Picture of Scotland," a description of his native country, probably designed



to serve the purpose of a guide-book. This was followed by various contributions to "Constable's Miscellany," the first of which, "A History of the Rebellion of 1745," is, in its revised form, the standard work on the subject. To the "Miscellany" he also contributed a "History of the Rebellions in Scotland under the Marquis of Montrose and others, from 1638 to 1660," in two volumes; a "History of the Rebellions in Scotland under Viscount Dundee and the Earl of Mar, in 1689 and 1715;" and a "Life of James I.," in two volumes. Nor does the list of his literary labors end here. He edited, in 1829, "Scottish Ballads and Songs," in three volumes; and, in 1832-'35, a "Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen," in four volumes. The latter work is one of the most entertaining and trustworthy of its class in existence; and, in various forms, has passed through several editions.

In 1819 Robert Chambers married Miss Anne Kirkwood, a Glasgow young lady, who proved in every respect a most congenial helpmate for him. Like her husband, she was fond of music, and, after the labors of the day were over, would seat herself at the harp or piano-forte, which he accompanied with an old flute which had been his solace and companion through his long and dreary struggles in the "Dark Ages."

While Robert was diligently adding to his literary laurels, William Chambers, whose tastes inclined him rather toward business than toward literature, did not allow his pen to remain altogether idle. He compiled a work entitled "The Book of Scotland," giving an account of the institutions, secular and religious, peculiar to his native country; and, with some slight assistance from his brother, prepared a "Gazetteer of Scotland," in which he embodied as much original material as possible. For this work, which was a thick octavo volume, double columns, small type, he received only one hundred pounds, of which he gave Robert thirty pounds for his trouble in revising it. A work which paid him better for his labor was the republication of a series of letters he addressed to an Edinburgh newspaper, animadverting on the civic administration of the



city. From the general interest felt in the subject, and from the trenchant style in which censure was administered, this pamphlet attained a prodigious sale.

By the period to which our narrative has now arrived, the Chamberses had, by frugality, patience, and industry, raised themselves from poverty to comparative affluence. Their rise upward had not, indeed, been altogether uninterrupted by misfortune; nevertheless, on the whole, their career had been, as it deserved to be, a remarkably successful one, and yet greater success was in store for them. In January, 1832, was issued, by William Chambers, the prospectus of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, the enterprise which entitles them to the first rank among promoters of popular literature. In the prospectus it was announced that "no communications in prose or verse were wanted"—in which, says William Chambers, "there was an air of self-confidence, not perhaps to be justified, but, as showing that my periodical was not to be composed of the contributions of anonymous and irresponsible correspondents, the effect was on the whole beneficial."

It cannot be claimed for William Chambers, and he does not claim it for himself, that the idea of the *Journal* was original. Several cheap popular periodicals had already been set on foot in Edinburgh, the best of which was a one and a half-penny weekly broadside called the *Cornucopia*, started by one Mudie. Mudie was without capital, and struggled under great monetary difficulties for some time to establish the *Cornucopia*, when ultimately the success of *Chambers's Journal* drove him out of the field. In the *Cornucopia* Mudie endeavored, among other things, to teach French, and here, perhaps, we have the germ of such publications as the "Popular Educator." He appears, indeed, to have been a man of considerable inventive genius. Printing was then in a very different state from what it is now; and Mudie, finding the capabilities of the old wooden hand-press insufficient for the demands of the *Cornucopia*, invented what may be called an early cylinder machine, which resembled, and was little more than, one of the old-fashioned

common mangles. This was to be seen at the time at work in the basement under a shop in the South Bridge, Edinburgh.

On February 4, 1832, appeared the first number of *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*. It consisted of eight pages folio, and bore on its title-page that it was "conducted by William Chambers, author of the 'Book of Scotland,' 'Gazetteer of Scotland,' etc." To it was prefixed a lengthy and somewhat high-flown address by the editor. "The grand leading principle by which I have been actuated," he says, "is to take advantage of the universal appetite for instruction which at present exists; to supply to that appetite food of the best kind, and in such form and at such a price as must suit the convenience of *every man in the British dominions*. Every Saturday, when the poorest laborer in the country draws his humble earnings, he shall have it in his power to purchase, with an insignificant portion of even that humble sum, a meal of healthful, useful, and agreeable mental instruction; nay, every school-boy shall be able to purchase with his pocket-money something permanently useful, something calculated to influence his fate through life, instead of the trash upon which the grown children of the present day were wont to expend it. Entertaining such a design as this—one calculated to be of such extensive service to mankind at large—these apologies, which Johnson has already condemned as being

"'With merit needless, and without it vain,'

would be unutterably ridiculous. Whether I succeed in my wishes, a very brief space of time will satisfactorily determine. I throw myself on the good-sense of my countrymen for support; all I seek is a fair field wherein to exercise my industry in their service, and should Heaven, in its mercy, grant me that share of health which, by its inscrutable providence, is now denied to so many around me, I do not despair of showing such a specimen of the powers of the printing-press as has hitherto been unexampled in the history of literature. It may, perhaps, be considered an invidious remark when I state, as my

honest conviction, that the people of Great Britain and Ireland have never been properly cared for in the way of presenting knowledge, under its most cheering and captivating aspect, to their immediate observation." He then proceeds to describe, with excusable magniloquence, the scope and character of the work on which he is about to enter.

The enterprise was at once successful. William Chambers states in his memoir of his brother that in a few days there was, for Scotland, the unprecedented sale of 50,000 copies; and that at the third number, when copies were consigned to an agent in London for disposal through England, the sale rose to 80,000, at which it long remained, with scarcely any advertising to give it publicity. In this, however, there appears to be some mistake.\* In a note at the end of the twelfth number of the *Journal* it is stated that "Mr. Chambers feels gratified in mentioning that the demand for the *Journal* is undergoing a daily increase in all parts of the country, and that the weekly impression now amounts to 31,000 copies;" and in a similar note at the end of the twentieth number we read that "Mr. Chambers has much pleasure in announcing that the weekly impression of the *Journal*, in Edinburgh and London, now amounts to 50,000 copies." However this may be, there is no doubt that its sale was altogether unprecedented, and that it speedily drove all its competitors from the field. With the thirty-seventh number the bulky folio size was changed for the more convenient quarto form.

Until the fourteenth number of the *Journal* Robert Chambers was only in the position of a contributor. After that he became associated with his brother as joint editor, and also became his partner in the business. There can be little doubt that it was to the numerous original contributions from his pen that the *Journal* owed a great part of its success. Though

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\* Since the above was written I have been informed, through Dr. Chambers, that the numbers given in the "Memoir" should have been made to apply to the *second* and not to the first series of the *Journal*.

his essays cannot be said to display any great ability or originality, they are very fair specimens of a kind of writing where excellence is rarely even approached. "During fifteen years," he says in the preface to a collection of his essays, "I have labored in this field, alternately gay, grave, sentimental, philosophical, until not much fewer than four hundred separate papers have proceeded from my pen." The papers, he goes on to say, were written under some difficulties, particularly those of a provincial situation, and a life too studious and recluse to afford much opportunity for the observation of social characteristics. This, however, was partly compensated for by the fact that it made his treatment of subjects less local and less liable to accidents of fashion than it might otherwise have been. "Everywhere I have sought less to attain elegance or observe refinement, than to avoid that last of literary sins—dulness. I have endeavored to be brief—direct; and I know I have been earnest. As to the sentiment and philosophy, I am not aware that any particular remark is called for. The only principles on which I have been guided are, as far as I am aware, these: whatever seems to me just, or true, or useful, or rational, or beautiful, I love and honor—wherever human woe can be lessened, or happiness increased, I would work to that end—wherever intelligence or virtue can be promoted, I would promote them. These dispositions will, I trust, be traced in my writings."

In 1834 Leigh Hunt set on foot the *London Journal*, a periodical, he said in his opening address, designed to be similar in point of size and variety to *Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*, but with a character a little more Southern and literary. This led to Robert Chambers's writing to congratulate him on the first number of the *London Journal*. In his letter he said that, while he acknowledged the truth of Leigh Hunt's pretensions to having been the reviver of the periodical literature of a former age, he must take this and every other proper opportunity of asserting his elder brother's merit as the originator of cheap respectable publications, of the class to which



the *Journal* was so important an addition. It may be questioned if the claim here advanced for *Chambers's Journal* to be regarded as the forerunner of cheap periodical literature can be supported; its great merit was, that it showed that a journal containing high-class literature, sold at a very cheap price, would command such an extensive array of purchasers as to make it very successful even from a purely commercial point of view. "That we have regretted," writes Robert Chambers in the letter before us, "to find ourselves the objects of so many of the meaner order of feelings among our brethren, it would be vain to deny. I must say, however, that we would have been ill to satisfy indeed, if the admission of our weekly sheet into almost every family of the middle rank, and many of the lower throughout the country, had not more than compensated us for that affliction. Our labors, moreover, are profitable beyond our hopes, beyond our wants, besides yielding to us a ceaseless revenue of pleasure, in the sense they convey to us of daily and hourly improving the hearts and understandings of a large portion of our species."

Encouraged by the success of the *Journal*, Messrs. Chambers, in 1833, entered upon another important enterprise—the work entitled "Chambers's Information for the People." Of this work, which consisted of three-half-penny sheets, each containing a paper on some important branch of knowledge, up to 1872 more than 170,000 sets had been sold. It is curious to compare the first edition with the later ones, which are so remodelled that only very faint traces of the original matter remains. In 1835 was commenced the publication of "Chambers's Educational Course," a series of manuals which, if some of them have been outstripped by later competitors, were, at the time of their first publication, unique alike in cheapness and excellence. To this series Robert Chambers contributed a "History of the English Language and Literature"—the first attempt to treat the subject within the limits of a school-book.

Among the other contributions of the Messrs. Chambers to popular literature may be mentioned their "Papers for the



People,” a series of tracts, containing biographies, popular scientific information, etc. They are of very unequal merit, some of them attaining really a high standard of value, while others (particularly some of the biographical ones) are very inferior. Another series, of somewhat the same scope, but adapted for a less intelligent circle of readers, was “Chambers’s Miscellany of Useful and Entertaining Tracts,” which attained an immense sale.

In 1844 Robert Chambers, assisted by the late Robert Carruthers, of Inverness, than whom it would have been difficult to find a more competent coadjutor, published his “Cyclopædia of English Literature,” in which all the eminent British authors are treated biographically and critically; choice specimens of their writings being also quoted. The work was a great success, and over 130,000 copies of it were sold in a few years. Careful revision of later editions has kept it abreast of the times; and though several works on English literature may be mentioned of greater brilliance of style and depth of criticism, it is, on the whole, the most useful companion the student can have. Another great service Robert Chambers did to literature was his “Life and Works of Burns,” published in 1850. The various compositions of the poet were presented in strict chronological order in connection with the narrative of his life—a mode of biography which cannot be recommended for general adoption, but which is not unattractive in the case of Burns, his poems and his life being so closely connected.

In 1859 the Messrs. Chambers entered on what must, next to the *Journal*, be considered their most important undertaking—“Chambers’s *Encyclopædia*, a Dictionary of Universal Knowledge for the People,” the tenth and last volume of which was published in 1868. Professedly founded on the German “Conversations-Lexicon,” it soon became something much better than a mere adaptation. Published at a very low price, and admirably edited by Dr. Andrew Findlater, who soon collected around him a host of excellent contributors, the work was de-

servedly very successful. It is emphatically an encyclopædia for the people. For profound and learned disquisitions larger works must be consulted; but for the general reader, who merely wishes to be put in possession of the broad facts of any subject, it is unsurpassed. "The information given," it was said in the preface to the first volume, "may be characterized as *non-professional*, embracing those points of the several subjects which every intelligent man or woman may have occasion to speak or think about. At the same time, every effort is made that the statements, so far as they go, shall be precise and scientifically accurate. One great aim in the arrangement of the work has been to render it *easy of consultation*. It is expressly a dictionary, in one alphabet, as distinguished on the one hand from a collection of exhaustive treatises, and on the other from a set of dictionaries of special branches of knowledge."

Among the many objects which engaged the versatile mind of Robert Chambers, the study of science occupied a prominent place. In geology, in particular, he attained no mean degree of proficiency, and he was also the author of a well-arranged school-manual of zoology, forming one of the "Educational Course." His most important contribution to science, however, was his "Ancient Sea Margins," a volume expounding a theory originally promulgated by him at one of the meetings of the British Association. In connection with Robert Chambers's scientific productions must be mentioned his alleged authorship of the "Vestiges of Creation," issued in 1845. This work (which was published by Messrs. Churchill, and rapidly went through several editions) attracted great attention from the beauty of its style and the freshness of its matter; and, as it was published anonymously, conjectures were rife as to its authorship. Professor Sedgwick, who reviewed it in the *Edinburgh Review*, was convinced that some woman was the writer. "I now know the 'Vestiges' well," he wrote to Macvey Napier (April 10, 1845), "and I detest the book for its shallowness, for the intense vulgarity of its philosophy, for its gross,

unblushing materialism, for its silly credulity in catering out of every fool's dish, for its utter ignorance of what is meant by induction, for its gross (and, I dare to say, filthy) views of physiology—most ignorant and most false—and for its shameful shuffling of the facts of geology, so as to make them play a rogue's game. I believe some woman is the author, partly from the fair dress and agreeable exterior of the 'Vestiges,' and partly from the utter ignorance the book displays of all sound physical logic. A *man* who knew so much of the surface of physics must, at least on some one point or other, have taken a deeper plunge; but *all* parts of the book are shallow. . . . From the bottom of my soul I loathe and detest the 'Vestiges.' 'Tis a rank pill of assafœtida and arsenic covered with gold-leaf." We are not aware that Professor Sedgwick's opinion as to the feminine authorship of the book ever found any supporters. It was by some attributed to George Combe, but this was afterward contradicted; and we believe it is generally supposed that it was written by Robert Chambers, with the assistance of the late Professor David Page. It is said that when, on his death-bed, Robert Chambers was asked whether he was the author of the "Vestiges," the shrewd old Scotchman replied, with a touch of his old humor, "So they say."

In his old age honors followed fast on Robert Chambers. In 1848, he stood as candidate for the Lord Provostship of Edinburgh, but withdrew on being asked to disavow the authorship of the "Vestiges." The office was afterward filled with dignity and usefulness by his brother William. He was appointed a member of various scientific societies; he was honored with the degree of LL.D. from the University of St. Andrews; and—a distinction he probably valued more than any of the others—he was admitted a member of the Athenæum Club.

In the preparation of his last important work, the "Book of Days," he found it necessary to avail himself of the vast resources of the British Museum, and accordingly removed to London. The toil he there went through in the completion of

his task told very severely on his already somewhat exhausted frame, and he never fully recovered from the strain. Of this work, which appeared in 1864, he was wont to say, "That book has been my death-blow." The closing years of his life were spent amid the pleasant scenery of St. Andrews, in which quaint old University town there was no better known or more respected figure than that of Robert Chambers. His last literary work was a life of his favorite novelist, Smollett, for which he obtained the use of some hitherto unpublished family documents. On March 17, 1871, his useful and honorable career came to a close. His last audible words were, "Quite comfortable—quite happy—nothing more." A general favorite among all to whom he was known, his death excited a widespread feeling of regret. "His worldly prosperity," wrote the late Dr. Carruthers, who knew him well, "kept pace with his acquirements and his labors; he was enabled to practise a liberal hospitality and a generous citizenship; strangers of any mark in literature or science were cordially welcomed; and a forenoon antiquarian ramble with Robert Chambers in the old town of Edinburgh, or a social evening with him in Doun Terrace, were luxuries highly prized and long remembered. Thus we have an instance of a life meritorious, harmonious in all its parts, happy, and benefiting society equally by its direct operation and its example."

Since his death the business has been carried on by Mr. William Chambers, with the assistance of his nephew, Robert. The *Journal* still flourishes with unabated vigor; although all the many papers started in imitation of it have long since sunk into oblivion. The cause of this, and of the success of most of the other publications of the Messrs. Chambers, is not far to seek. With elevated and, as the event has proved, accurate ideas of the causes which lead to permanent popularity, they strove to make the contents of the *Journal* sufficiently attractive to command the attention of the working-classes, and at the same time of a standard high enough to interest the better-educated sections of the community. In it there was none



of that patronizing tone toward the poorer classes which has been the bane of many similar productions; there was no tendency to "goody-goodyism;" and, while a considerable portion of it was devoted to instructive literature, the entertaining portion was not neglected. Hence it happens that, while most of the imitations of *Chambers's Journal* are now found to be quite unreadable, its massive quarto volumes from 1832 to 1844 will still be found to reward the attention of the curious reader. When, in 1845, the quarto form was exchanged for the octavo, it departed somewhat from its original character, and appealed more directly to educated readers. Since then it has been edited by the amiable Leitch Ritchie, by Mr. W. H. Wills, and by Mr. James Payn, who, besides contributing to it some of his best novels, adorned its columns with many of those bright and genial sketches of which he alone among living writers possesses the secret. Of late years it has been under other management, and has resumed a good deal of its original character.

It is rather singular that of the two leading promoters of literature for the people we should possess memoirs written by themselves. A large and by no means the least interesting part of Dr. William Chambers's "Memoir of Robert Chambers" is autobiographical; while, in his "Passages of a Working Life," Charles Knight, the other great pioneer of cheap literature, in his genial old age indited a most interesting and characteristic account of his experiences as a publisher. To it we are indebted for the greater portion of the materials of the present sketch.

He was born at Windsor, in 1791, and was the only child of his father. Windsor was then a very quiet, sleepy old town, wrapped in the slumbers of the eighteenth century, undisturbed by the clamor of modern improvements, and far too staid and decorous to tolerate living at high pressure. Its most important figure, of course, was worthy old George III., whose sayings and doings formed an inexhaustible subject for gossip in the little community. The good people of Windsor saw the



household virtues and condescending manners of his Majesty, and loved him, wisely disregarding the rumors that reached them from the capital of his blunders in matters of state and of his inflexible obstinacy.

Charles Knight's father was the leading bookseller and printer of Windsor, and hence had good opportunities for becoming acquainted with all in the place who possessed any literary taste, as well as with the master and some of the boys of Eton. Some years before the birth of his son he was publisher of the *Microcosm*, an Eton miscellany, conducted by Canning, which ranked among its contributors Hookham Frere and "Bobus" Smith, Sydney Smith's gifted brother, as well as other Etonians of note. His connection with this journal was the means of introducing him to many influential friends, some of whom were of use to his son afterward. Young Charles, who was educated at the school of a Dr. Nicholas, at Ealing, took readily to his book, and pursued his studies with so much assiduity as to impair his health and lay the foundation of a weakness of constitution which tormented him throughout life. His fondness for reading and his proficiency in his studies seemed to mark him out as a fit subject for receiving a classical education, especially as the neighborhood afforded such ample facilities for tuition; but, much to his regret, it was arranged otherwise. At the age of fourteen he signed indentures of apprenticeship to his father, and commenced the trade of a bookseller. His early tastes, however, never left him, and through all his long career Charles Knight strikes one as having had much more of the man of letters than of the man of business in his composition.

When, in 1812, he attained his majority he determined to put his literary qualifications to account, and accordingly went up to London, to acquire some experience of journalism in the office of the *Globe* newspaper. He had determined to have a newspaper of his own, and this wish was gratified on August 1 of the same year, when, in connection with his father, he started the *Eton and Windsor Express*, of which he assumed the

editorship. In his "Autobiography" he has given a graphic picture of the vexations and delays to which the editor of a country newspaper was at this time exposed, owing to the slowness and uncertainty of communication. His connection with the *Express* he retained till 1827, in spite of the many other literary projects in which he soon became engaged. In 1813 appeared his first work, a tragedy called "Arminius," which had been courteously rejected by the manager of Drury Lane Theatre. It is of no special excellence; nevertheless, it is decidedly superior to the majority of plays published by rejected dramatists. In 1820 he became co-editor, with H. E. Locker, of the *Plain Englishman*, a miscellaneous journal, which only lasted for two years. The most remarkable thing about it is that in its columns appeared an article by Knight, entitled "The Diffusion of Useful Knowledge"—a significant fact when we recollect Charles Knight's future career. A similar indication of the direction in which his thoughts were turning is afforded by an article on "Cheap Literature," which appeared in the *Windsor Express* for 1819.

In 1820 Charles Knight undertook the editorship of the *Guardian*, in partnership with a colleague, and henceforth his life was passed between London and Windsor. In 1822 he gave up his connection with the *Guardian*, and entered on his life as a publisher in a shop in Pall Mall. His first important publishing enterprise was one for which he was indebted to his connection with Windsor. One day while there, two promising Etonians—William Mackworth Praed and Walter Blunt—waited on him with the request that he should publish an Eton miscellany. With characteristic enterprise Mr. Knight at once entered into the proposal, and the result was the *Etonian*, the leading contributor to which was Praed, whose rippling wit touched nothing that it did not adorn. The editorship was intrusted to Walter Blunt, who entered on his duties with the greatest enthusiasm. "It was refreshing," writes Mr. Knight, "after the dry labors of the day in town, to watch the bright, earnest, happy face of Mr. Blunt, who took a manifest delight

in doing the editorial drudgery; the worst proofs (for in the haste unavoidable in periodical literature he would sometimes catch hold of a proof *unread*) never disturbed the serenity of his temper. To him it seemed a real happiness to stand at a desk in the composing-room." The miscellany went on with fair success till Praed went to Cambridge, when the loss of so great a contributor proved so disastrous that it was found necessary to terminate it.

The *Etonian* was followed by a larger and more ambitious production, suitable to the more advanced age of its conductors. This was *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, memorable forever in the history of literature as the periodical where Macaulay's earliest productions in prose and verse appeared. Among its other contributors were Derwent Coleridge, Malden, Praed, and De Quincey, for its writers were not confined to young University men. The work was at first very successful, and attracted considerable public attention. "Christopher North" wrote of the contributors as a hopeful class of young scholars in a patronizing tone, which was warmly resented by the conductors of the *Magazine*. Charles Knight declared that he had read and rejected seventy-eight prose articles, and one hundred and twenty copies of occasional verses, all the property of the old periodical press; while Praed wrote that "Christopher North was a barn from his wig to his slippers." The periodical begun under such bright auspices was not destined to continue long. Its contributors were not sensible of the responsibilities of their office; they observed no sort of regularity in sending in their communications; and at length things came to such a pass that Charles Knight felt "that he had to choose between surrendering the responsibility which his duties to society compelled him to retain, or to lose much of the assistance which had given to the *Quarterly Magazine* its peculiar character." In these circumstances he felt compelled to discontinue his connection with the *Magazine*, which, after lingering on for another quarter under different management, expired with its seventh number.

One great cause of its discontinuance was the commercial

panic of 1825-'26, which ruined Constable, and left Scott struggling with a giant mass of debt which he did his best to repay. Though Charles Knight had, fortunately, no bills afloat at this time of disaster, he had ample opportunity of becoming acquainted with the events of the panic in his endeavor to assist the Windsor Bank. "In the Albany," he writes, "we found the partners of one firm deliberating by candle-light; a few words showed how unavailing was the hope of help from them: 'We shall ourselves stop at nine o'clock.' The dark December morning gradually grew lighter; the gas-lamps died out; but long before it was perfect day we found Lombard Street blocked up by eager crowds, each man struggling to be foremost at the bank where he kept his accounts, if its door should be opened." This terrible panic practically put a stop to publishing business for a time; old plans had to be abandoned and new ones sought out. A humorous paper, the *Brazen Head*, started by Mr. Knight, was found to chime in so little with the temper of the time that it had to be abandoned, although Praed was among its contributors. This diverted Mr. Knight's thoughts into other channels; he recurred to his early projects as to cheap literature; and hence ensued those events in his life which give him a place in this chapter.

We have seen that very early in his literary career Charles Knight had turned his thoughts in the direction of cheap literature. About the time of which we are now writing he formed a plan of a "National Library," which should contain high-class books at a low price. Lord Brougham, whose head was then full of schemes about the "Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," heard of the plan, and obtained an introduction to Mr. Knight. This led the way to farther and closer intercourse. At length Mr. Knight received a document which, he says, he valued as a soldier values his first commission, offering him the superintendence of the publications of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. The offer was accepted, and here Mr. Knight's real life-work may be said to begin.



In the previous chapter some account has been given of the Useful Knowledge Society, and of the terms on which Mr. Knight acted as its publisher. They cannot be said to have been over-liberal to him, as, in a case presently to be mentioned, he found to his cost. At first, as has been said, almanacs were among the most conspicuous of the society's publications; and very rightly so, for the vulgar, obscene, and superstitious trash then circulated under that name did a great deal of harm, especially in country districts. A more important enterprise was the *Penny Magazine*. "Let us," said Mr. M. D. Hill to Charles Knight one day, while talking about the badness of the cheap prints of the period—"let us see what something cheap and good can accomplish! Let us have a penny magazine!" "And what shall we call it?" said Knight. "The *Penny Magazine*," was the reply. Brougham signified his approval of the scheme; and though the lowness of the price was objected to by some, as derogatory to the dignity of the society, it was determined that the magazine should be issued. The first number appeared in March, 1832, a few weeks subsequent to *Chambers's Journal*, which it in many respects resembled. It had excellent contributors (among them being Long, De Morgan, Creswick, Allan Cunningham, and Thomas Pringle), but they never seem to have been able to get rid of the idea that they were writing for a *penny* periodical; and hence the early volumes of the *Penny Magazine* cannot compare with the early volumes of *Chambers's Journal* in permanent interest and value. At first, however, it far outstripped *Chambers's* in circulation, for at the close of 1832 it reached a sale of 200,000 in weekly and monthly parts.

The *Penny Magazine* was followed by decidedly the most useful of the society's enterprises—the *Penny Encyclopædia*, of which the first number appeared in July, 1833. It is, as has been well said, one of the few instances of a book which, instead of beginning with pompous professions which were not fulfilled, enlarged on the humble intentions of those who commenced it. "It happened, in fact," writes Mr. John Hill Bur-



ton, "to fall into the hands of two enthusiasts, Charles Knight and George Long. It was intended to be a mere light, popular work, skimming science and literature for penny purchasers; but it was made a scholarly work, in which some of the ablest men of the day in their special departments partook." According to the original project, the work was to be comprised in eight volumes, which were to appear in penny numbers. After a year, however, the price and quantity were doubled; after other three years, they were quadrupled. Though these alterations added to the intrinsic value of the publication, they had a ruinous effect upon its circulation. The sale, which originally amounted to 75,000, fell first to 55,000, then to 44,000, and finally to 20,000. The paper duty, which at the commencement of its publication was threepence a pound, was an immense drawback on the success of the work, which finally entailed on Mr. Knight the ruinous loss of £16,000. On the conclusion of the *Penny Encyclopædia* Mr. Knight was entertained by the contributors to a banquet. The work, indeed, in spite of the pecuniary loss entailed by it, was one on which he and those associated with him might well congratulate themselves. On its literary matter the expenditure amounted to £40,000; for which sum the services of such men as George Cornewall Lewis, Philip and William Smith, J. W. Donaldson, W. J. Broderib, G. L. Craik, and many others of equal calibre, were secured. The plebeian name of the *Encyclopædia* no doubt did it much harm among certain classes. An American editor of classical works was so ashamed of it that in his notes he invariably referred to it as *Us. Knowl. Encyc.*

Of the great Biographical Dictionary which the society commenced, Mr. Knight, fortunately for himself, was only concerned as editor. The first instalment of that daring attempt forms a production on which scholars look with fond and admiring regret. "A magnificent work it would certainly have been if completed," writes Mr. John Hill Burton.\* "There exists a

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\* In an article, "The Alphabeticals," *Blackwood's Magazine*, September, 1864.

fragment of it—sometimes, perhaps, to be contemplated by the scholar with admiration at the grandeur of the design, as the sculptor has looked at the Torso, or the archæologist at the Cathedral of Cologne—only the literary fragment bears a far smaller proportion to the design. It consists of seven octavo volumes, very closely printed; and how far do they reach? The length of the letter A—no farther. If this fragment be compared with the ‘*Biographie Universelle*,’ or the ‘*Biographie Générale*,’ which now hold, as rivals, the foremost place in their class, the superiority of the English work in compactness and completeness becomes at once conspicuous.” It was put under the management of Mr. George Long, a ripe scholar, a good organizer, and a strict disciplinarian. It is said that his troops felt a sort of relief when their functions came to a premature conclusion. A sense of duty, and an emulous desire to co-operate and to bring the work up to the high standard which he had set, kept them at their work doggedly; but it was not of the kind which satisfied the popular pen, or even the philosophic and meditative. All flowers of rhetoric and sentiment were nipped in the bud, to find room for dates, places, and the titles of books. Every attempt at an excursion on a favorite hobby was stopped at the outset. In a work which threatened to spread beyond two hundred considerable volumes there might surely, it was supposed, be a corner for storing away a few judicious reflections beside the hard facts which the compiler had to gather up with pains and labor; but the luxury was no more to be admitted than a dangerous indulgence to a soldier on the march.” Mr. Burton goes on to relate an instance of George Long’s severe discipline. A scholar, whose studies ran in a peculiar and narrow line, had determined to write the life of another who had preceded him in the same school of inquiry. The subject had so little general interest that he could find no publisher willing to undertake it. He accordingly offered his memoir to the *Biographical Dictionary*, if a suitable space could be spared for it. He was told that in the special circumstances some allowance would be

made, and that he would be permitted to occupy a full half page, instead of being restricted to a few lines.

Among Mr. Knight's undertakings on his own responsibility the most important was his "Shilling Volumes for all Readers" (1844-'49), a series comprised in one hundred and eighty-six 16mo volumes of some 240 pages each. The volumes consist partly of reprints of copyright works, partly of original writings, and are nearly all of permanent interest and value. Knight's editorial labors came to an end when about two-thirds of the series was completed; but he considered himself responsible for the general character of all the works. "I may confidently state," he writes, "that in this extensive series no single work, and no portion of a work, can be found that may not safely be put into the hands of the young and uninformed, with the security that it will neither mislead nor corrupt." The merit thus claimed for them the volumes certainly possess, but moral excellence is not their only claim to distinction. It may be doubted whether even in this age, when cheap paper has given such an immense impetus to literature for the people, any series of cheap books has been published which can on the whole be pronounced superior to Mr. Knight's "Shilling Volumes." In spite of their merits their sale was disappointingly small. Mr. Knight tells us that not twenty volumes of the series reached a sale of 10,000 copies.

Among Mr. Knight's other publishing adventures were the "Gallery of Portraits," to which some of the leading literary men of the day, including Hallam and De Quincey, were contributors; the "Pictorial Bible," edited by John Kitto, who owed whatever distinction he possessed mainly to Charles Knight's generous patronage; the "Pictorial History of England," edited by Professor Craik and Mr. Charles Macfarlane, which at first promised to be a success, but finally turned out a failure, owing to its undue lengthiness, and to the fact that the editors foolishly devoted four volumes out of the eight to the reign of George III.; and various editions of Shakspeare, for whom Mr. Knight always possessed an enthusiasm ap-

proaching to idolatry. His "Life of Shakspeare" is still one of the best accounts of what we know and what we can ingeniously conjecture about the poet, though parts of it have been superseded by more recent researches. On the establishment of the Poor Law Board, Mr. Knight became officially connected with it as its publisher, and from that time he almost entirely gave up his business as a general publisher. In 1854 appeared the first volume of his "Popular History of England," which was completed in 1862. He claims for it the distinction of being the only complete history of England entirely the work of one author. Though not, of course, displaying any very deep research, it is a very useful and agreeable work, and contains more information about the social condition of the people at different epochs than will be readily found elsewhere. Among Mr. Knight's other works may be mentioned "Half-hours with the Best Authors," a series of extracts from great writers, with introductory notices prefixed, which attained great popularity; "Once upon a Time;" "Shadows of the Old Booksellers;" and his autobiography, "Passages of a Working Life for Half a Century," to which reference has already been made. On March 9, 1873, his long and useful life came to an end. He was buried in the family vault at Windsor. His singularly amiable character, which had amply merited for him Douglas Jerrold's surname of "Good Knight," endeared him to all with whom he was acquainted; and when he was laid in the grave it was felt that many years might come and go ere the publishing trade would be adorned by one so generous, so appreciative of merit, and so ready to sacrifice his private interest to the public weal.

Next to the Chamberses and Charles Knight, though at a long interval, as a promoter of cheap literature, may be placed John Cassell, the founder of the great publishing house of Cassell, Petter, Galpin, & Co. His youthful experiences were of a kind calculated to make him fully aware of the difficulty the lower orders had in procuring books either for instruction or amusement. Born at Manchester, in January, 1817, the child



of poor parents, he was brought up to the trade of a carpenter, which he followed during his early years, at the same time neglecting no opportunity for improving his mind so far as his slender facilities for acquiring knowledge permitted. In 1833, when the total abstinence movement commenced in Lancashire, Cassell made his appearance as a temperance lecturer. Shortly afterward he removed to London, where he still carried on his trade, and acted as a temperance lecturer. After some time he thought that he might do better service to the cause by his pen than by his tongue, and accordingly started a temperance publishing office and bookshop in the Strand. In addition to his business as a bookseller, he undertook the management of a tea and coffee establishment in Fenchurch Street; but publishing and tea and coffee selling were not found to be congenial occupations, and the latter involved him in considerable liabilities.

The fact that Cassell had himself been a working-man told in favor of his publications addressed to the class from which he had himself sprung. He entered into partnership with Messrs. Petter & Galpin, who had hitherto been known only as printers, but who were found eager co-operators with him in the work of providing cheap and popular books. His publishing premises were now removed to La Belle Sauvage Yard, which still remains the head-quarters of the firm. Mr. Thomas Frost, in his "Forty Years' Recollections," affords us a glimpse of Cassell and his place of business at this time. "I had," he writes, "some conversation with Cassell, on the occasion of our first meeting, concerning the popular periodicals of that day; and on hearing that I was one of the authors of the 'Papers for the People,' he thought that I could be useful to him in the conducting of his own social publications. Early in the following spring I received a letter from him asking me to call at his office at my earliest convenience; and on the following morning, just as ten o'clock was booming over the City, I passed under the archway of Belle Sauvage Yard, which at that time presented a very different aspect to that which it has as-



sumed since the erection of the present premises of his successors. On the left, just through the archway, which in the old coaching days was the entrance to the court-yard of the ancient inn from which the place derives its name, there was a dingy and dilapidated building, the greater part of which was propped up within and without, to prevent the whole from crumbling and cracking until it came down with a crash. This was the printing-office. Farther up, on the same side of the yard, but detached from the main building, was a six-roomed house, the ground-floor of which was used as store-rooms, the apartments being occupied by the proprietor and the gentlemen composing the editorial staff. In a sparsely furnished room, on the first floor, I found John Cassell, a tall, sallow-complexioned man, with straight, black hair, and a pleasant expression of countenance. He was generally to be found there from eleven to four, smoking a cigar, with which indulgence he solaced himself for his abstinence from wine and beer. When I entered the room he was sitting at a table strewn with letters and newspapers, smoking as he read; but he rose on my entrance, and, there being only one chair in the room, leaned against the table, still smoking."

While the cheap publications of Cassell cannot as a whole be compared in value to those of the Chamberses and Charles Knight, they occupied a sphere of their own, in which they did good service. His *Family Paper* (a weekly periodical bearing a considerable resemblance to the present *London Journal*, but with a larger infusion of morality, and with a slightly greater proportion of instructive matter), if not very valuable, was at any rate harmless and pleasing, which is more than can be said of many of the papers which it displaced. The *Quiver*, which still exists in a flourishing condition, was one of the earliest of the cheap religious serials, and contained nothing that could give offence to any one. It owed much of its early popularity to Mrs. Henry Wood, several of whose best fictions appeared there. The "Popular Educator" was a good notion well carried out, though it cannot be said to justify the extravagant

estimates formed of it, and its effects by Lord Brougham and others. One is tempted to think that its excessive variety of contents would rather lead to confusion than edification in the mind of any one who perused it systematically. The rest of Cassell's publications consisted mainly of cheap and educational works, and illustrated editions, at a low price, of standard popular books, such as "Don Quixote," the "Pilgrim's Progress," "Robinson Crusoe," etc. We must not omit to notice his "Family Bible," which commenced in 1859. Its cost of production is said to have been £100,000; and in six years upward of 350,000 copies were disposed of.

John Cassell died in 1865, leaving, it is said, his wife a shareholder in the firm to the extent of £42,000. Since his death the firm has embarked in much more extensive undertakings, and now rank among the leading publishers, especially in the department of illustrated books. Canon Farrar's "Life of Christ," perhaps the most successful book of the day, issues from their press. They are also largely engaged in supplying suburban and country newspapers with a partially-printed sheet of general news, upon the other side of which the local news and advertisements are printed by those to whom the sheet is supplied; and they do the largest business in supplying electrotypes from woodcut illustrations. The firm has branch houses in Paris and New York.

Looking at the present state of the publishing world, we see how far the expectations of the promoters of cheap literature have been realized, and how far they have been disappointed. Especially since the repeal of the paper duty the Press has swarmed with cheap reprints of standard authors which would have excited the amazement of a former generation. But it can scarcely be said that the highest class of copyright publications are (at any rate, on their first publication) issued at a lower rate than were books of the same class fifty years ago. The library system, now spread from Land's End to John-o'-Groats so thickly that no town of the least importance is without its circulating library, has a tendency to keep people in

general from buying new copyright books; and it appears to be found more profitable to issue a comparatively small edition at a high price than, trusting to a very wide circulation, to venture on a large edition at a low price. Perhaps the most noticeable result of the cheap literature movement is its effect on the price of school-books, which are now issued at a fourth of the price they sold at some forty years ago. Of the enormous extension of the newspaper and magazine Press within the last twenty years we shall speak in a subsequent chapter.





## PENNY POSTAGE.

### *SIR ROWLAND HILL.*

WHEN once a great reform has been thoroughly achieved people are apt to think little about it, or, if they do reflect on it at all, to suppose that its achievement could not have been a matter of very great difficulty. They see only the practical result: the difficulties and vexations which beset the projector of the reform, the obstacles which harassed him, the prejudice and ignorance with which he had to contend, are hidden behind the mist of years. Penny postage has been so long familiar to us, that the trying and arduous struggle by which it was obtained is well-nigh forgotten. Few of the present generation can recall the time when the postage of a letter was, to all except the higher orders, no trifling expense—when to the great majority of the working-classes it was a very serious matter indeed; and the few who can recall it have been for so many years accustomed to the present order of things, that it has almost escaped their memory that it ever really was otherwise. The postal facilities we at present enjoy are mainly due to the energy and perseverance of one man—Sir Rowland Hill. To him was granted a boon often denied to reformers. After bearing with undaunted courage the sneers to which his scheme was for long subjected, after hearing his conclusions ridiculed and his success denied, he had the satisfaction to live long enough to see his plan carried out with such completeness that its most bitter opponents were forced to own that it had entirely succeeded, and that, so far from be-

ing wild and visionary, as they had styled it, it had been eminently sensible and practical.

Those who are fond of tracing the influence of the intellect and character of parents upon their children may find some corroboration of their theories in the case of Rowland Hill. His father was originally engaged in trade, which occupation he, at the age of forty, exchanged for the more congenial calling of a school-master. He was a man of cheerful, sanguine disposition; and, like most people of that temperament, had a calm persuasion that all his plans and projects were about as perfect as human infirmity admitted of. However thoroughly his schemes broke down in practice, he never wavered for a moment in his belief of their excellence; in this respect much resembling a certain friend of his who once took him to see a machine for producing perpetual motion. The inventor boasted of his success. "*There,*" he said, "the machine is." "Does it go?" the visitor asked. "No, it does not go; but I will defy all the world to show *why* it does not go." Among his many inventions which he prided himself on was an improved system of short-hand, which he seems to have valued, not because it could be written with rapidity, but because its appearance was elegant. "Cast your eye over it," said he, "and observe the distinctness of the elementary characters—the graceful shape of the words—the perfect continuity of every combination as to the consonants—the distinctness of the lines resulting from the lineality of the short-hand writing." As a school-master, his mode of training presented several original features. He had a passion for melodious and rhythmical sounds, and few things offended him so much as what he called a collision. There was a collision when two like sounds came together. Even in repeating the multiplication-table he demanded that his pupils should speak euphoni-ously. For example, they said "five sixes are thirty," but "five times five is twenty-five." The boy who said "five fives is twenty-five" would have incurred imminent risk of a flogging.





SIR ROWLAND HILL.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
LIBRARY

If, as was said, Rowland Hill's father had every sense except common-sense, his mother, on the other hand, possessed that quality in very large measure. His faculty for devising ingenious plans Rowland derived from his father; his shrewdness in seeing what parts of them were practicable and what were not, and the undeviating perseverance with which, when he had entered on an enterprise, he carried it through to the end, he inherited from his mother. From her he also inherited a certain stiffness and coldness of manner which did not tell in his favor. Harriet Martineau says, in her "Autobiography," that when he first introduced his Penny Postage scheme "his manner—his slowness and hesitating speech—were not recommendatory of his doctrine to those who would not trouble themselves to discern its excellence and urgent need."

At the time of Rowland Hill's birth (December 3, 1795) his father was residing at Kidderminster. Work failing him there, he removed to Wolverhampton, where his salary was so small and prices were so high that it was only by the strictest economy that he could manage to keep his head above water. In his old age Rowland Hill used to recall what privations his family endured during the terrible dearth of 1800, when food was at famine prices, and the nation was engaged in what was certainly a disastrous and, as many thought, a hopeless struggle with France. When he was seven years old his father removed to Birmingham and started as a school-master. He was still a poor man, and his children had to resort to many shifts to eke out the family stock of money. "I was called upon," Rowland writes, "at a very early age to perform many offices which, in richer families, are discharged exclusively by servants—to go on errands, to help in cleaning, arranging, and even repairing, and, in short, to do any sort of work that lay within my power. By this means I gradually acquired, as will hereafter better appear, a feeling of responsibility, and habits of business, despatch, punctuality, and independence, which have proved invaluable to me throughout life." To enable them to raise a little money wherewith to buy tools and machinery, he and his

brother Matthew, afterward Recorder of Birmingham, did not disdain to adopt some devices which show that they could not have stood much upon their dignity. One morning they were sent out to buy hot cross buns for the household, and, as they were returning home with them, hearing the Birmingham street-venders call out—

“Hot cross buns! hot cross buns!

One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns!

Sugar 'em, and butter 'em, and clap 'em in your muns,”

the lads in jest repeated the cry. To their surprise they were soon surrounded by customers, and, not unwilling to carry out the joke, speedily emptied their basket, and had to return for more. As they had bought the buns at wholesale price and sold them at retail, they thus gained some pence of profit, which were doubtless very thankfully received. Before this enterprise Rowland had engaged in a mercantile transaction. He was presented by his mother with a small plot of ground for a garden, and, finding it covered with a crop of horehound, began to clear it off to make room for flowers, when he was told it had a money value. He cut it, and, having tied it up in bundles, set off one day to the market-place to dispose of his wares, and was fortunate enough to receive eightpence in return. At the time this happened he was only eight years old.

Rowland Hill's school education, which had been all along of a rather desultory kind, came almost to an end at the age of twelve, when he was called upon to assist his father in teaching. But the most valuable part of his education was what he learned at home in the family circle, where all topics were discussed with the greatest freedom, his father not disdaining to argue with his children as with his equals. On political topics especially he loved to descant. “Our whole family,” says his son, “might be regarded as a little political economy club, sitting not, indeed, at stated times, but yet at short intervals, and debating, if not with much method, yet with great earnestness.” The want of a regular education was



not so disadvantageous to Rowland as it would have been to many. He was pre-eminently self-reliant and energetic; and it may be questioned, though at one time of his life he aspired after a university education, if he would have profited so much by it as he did by the knowledge he picked up by his own unaided endeavors. His studies were various, but mathematics, for which he had a strong natural turn, absorbed most of his attention. He also paid great attention to science, reading all the elementary text-books that came in his way, and gratified his propensity for mechanical contrivances by constructing many curious machines, among others a water-clock and an electric battery.

By degrees he and his brother Matthew took the real management of the school out of their father's hands. As Rowland approached manhood he could not but see that many features in it were susceptible of improvement; and he was never the man to shrink from any reform, however radical, when he saw that it was really needed. By the time he was of age he was, in everything but name, the real head-master. The school grew and flourished under his auspices, until the old premises were found too limited for the influx of pupils, and Hazlewood School, at Edgbaston, was built in 1819 to accommodate them. Rowland Hill's fame in connection with penny postage has caused his reputation as an educational reformer to be almost entirely forgotten. Nevertheless, as such he made no small stir in his day, and a work written by him, in conjunction with his brother Matthew, entitled "Public Education," which appeared in 1822, caused a great sensation. In it the educational system pursued at Hazlewood School was expounded, and the public invited to visit it and see the results. Jeremy Bentham sent a friend to inspect the school, and was so pleased with his report that he placed two Greeks there to be educated at his own expense. In January, 1825, the work on "Public Education" was honored with a most friendly article in the *Edinburgh Review*, and a year later an equally favorable notice of it from the pen of De Quincey appeared in the



*London Magazine.* Among those who visited Hazlewood were the venerable Wilberforce and Grote, the future historian of Greece, who testified his approbation of it by removing two of Mrs. Grote's nephews from Eton and placing them there. As our main concern is not with Rowland Hill as an educationist, we need not pause to enter into detail about his methods. When we mention that the code of laws for the management of the school was a volume of over a hundred pages, we have said enough to show that the system must have been ineffably cumbersome and complex. In his old age Rowland Hill himself laughed good-humoredly at its intricacy, and said he greatly doubted whether he should send his own son to a school taught on so complicated a system. "By juries and committees, by marks and appeals to a sense of honor," writes an old pupil, "discipline was maintained. But this was done, I think, at too great a sacrifice. The thoughtlessness, the spring, the elation of childhood were taken from us; we were premature men. . . . The school was, in truth, a moral hot-bed, which forced us into a precocious imitation of maturity. I have heard an Oxford friend say that Arnold's men had a little of the prig about them. I know too well that some of us had a great deal of the prig about us. I have often wished that I had the 'gift to see ourselves as others see us;' but I have comforted myself with observing that in later life my school-fellows (perhaps, therefore, I myself) outgrew this unamiable characteristic. The Hazlewood constitution, discipline, instruction, were in a perpetual flux; the right to-day was wrong to-morrow; we learned to criticise and doubt everything established: 'Whatever is, is wrong,' might have been our motto. We had a conceit that we could amend everything, from education to driving a horse." Perhaps the priggishness that characterized the school was due to the fact that its originators, like most young men, and especially like most young reformers, were not without a slight taint of priggishness themselves.

In 1826 Rowland Hill, whom the great success of the school

had placed in comparatively affluent circumstances, married Miss Pearson, whom he had known and loved since his boyhood. "I cannot record my marriage," he said in a memoir of himself which he wrote in his old age, "without adding that my dear wife's help in my subsequent toils, and not least in those best known to the public, was important, perhaps essential, to their success."\* The prosperity which had attended the educational experiment set afoot at Birmingham appearing to justify its extension to a wider sphere, a similar institution to Hazlewood School was started at Bruce Castle, Tottenham, where Rowland Hill brought his bride. In all his enterprises, both now and afterward, he was deeply indebted to the help afforded him by his brothers. Rarely or never has there been such an example of family union and co-operation as was afforded by the Hills. For a long time they had a common purse; and to the last none of them ever entered on any great project, or decided any important question, without asking the advice of the others. "In our course through life," says Rowland Hill, "from the beginning to the present hour, each one of us has been always ready to help the others to the best of his power; and no one has failed to call for such assistance again and again."

Rowland Hill's life during his residence at Bruce Castle was mainly that of a school-master, and was not diversified by any striking incident. Gradually he began to tire of his profession, and to long to engage in something where his energies might have freer scope; where, in his own words, "he might do, or at least attempt, something which would make the world manifestly the better for my having lived in it." School-mastering, unless one has a great natural bent for it, and enters upon it with all one's faculties centred on the work, is a pre-eminently dull and harassing profession; so we need not wonder that he began to doubt the expediency of his continuing in a path of life into which he had entered from necessity rather than from

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\* Lady Caroline Hill died on June 11, 1881.

choice. In his scanty intervals of leisure his inventive genius was busily employed in devising schemes by which he might obtain a living after he had withdrawn from the school. Among these were, "Pendulous Mechanism Applied to Steam-engines;" "Propelling Steamboats by a Screw;" "Plan for Checking the Speed of Stage Coaches;" "Weighing Letters;" "Assorting Letters in a Coach;" "Telegraphs, by Pressure of Air, etc.;" "Gas, for Distant Places, Compressed along Small Pipes;" "Road-making by Machinery." The reader will not fail to notice here the germs of several schemes which were afterward carried to completeness, and have not a little revolutionized society. A cylinder printing-machine which he invented, and on which he spent upward of £2000, would, it can scarcely be doubted, have effected an immense change in newspaper printing at that time, had his plans not been baffled by an unfortunate obstacle. These were the days of the stamp-duty on newspapers; and by the requirements of the Inland Revenue department every separate sheet on which a newspaper was printed had to bear on it an embossed stamp—the separate sheets being sent to the Stamp-office to be so impressed, and then returned to the various newspaper printing-offices ready for use. This necessity for cutting the paper into separate sheets before printing was fatal to printing the newspaper from a continuous scroll, as Rowland Hill's machine required; and when he applied to the Treasury to make arrangements to allow the stamp to be affixed by machinery as the scroll went through the press, he was met by a curt refusal. "This decision on the part of the Treasury deferred for something like five-and-thirty years the introduction of the present rotatory printing-press.\*

In 1835 Rowland Hill's desire for public employment was gratified by his being appointed secretary to the South Australian Commission. This office he retained till 1839, discharging its duties with great assiduity and success. It was while hold-

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\* "Life of Sir Rowland Hill," vol. i., p. 227.

ing it that he turned his attention to the great work of his life—Postal Reform.

We have already mentioned that in the family circle of the Hills political questions formed a subject of frequent discussion. Among these post-office operations naturally found a place, especially as, the Hills being poor, they were often very unpleasantly reminded of the high postal rates then prevalent. Thus, if they received a letter from London, ninepence was the charge; if from Haddington, where they had relatives, it was thirteen and a half pence. No wonder that they, and people in circumstances resembling theirs, often regarded the arrival of a letter as a decided misfortune. Many odd stories are told of the immense sums postage occasionally amounted to. The captain of a ship arriving at Deal once posted for London a packet weighing thirty-two ounces, which came to the person to whom it was addressed charged with a postage of upward of six pounds, "being four times as much as the charge for an inside place by the mail." So that had the captain, instead of posting the letter, sent a special messenger with it up to London, paying him handsomely for his time and for his travelling expenses, the result would have been a considerable saving. Another case of the same kind was communicated by Sir George Burgoyne to a friend of Rowland Hill: "A packet of official papers was to be transmitted by one of our officers from a country town to Dublin: it seems that *parcels* for the mail were in that town received in the same shop as the letters; and, either by mistake of the messenger or of the postmaster, this packet, which was meant to be a *parcel*, was forwarded as a *letter*. The charge was eleven pounds—that is, for a packet which I could readily carry off in my pocket; an amount for which I could have taken the *whole mail*, places for four insides, and three out, with their portmanteaus, carpet-bags, etc." It must be remembered that at this time letters were chiefly charged, not by weight, but by the number of enclosures. Thus, a letter written on a single large sheet of paper, weighing perhaps nearly an ounce, was charged



only a single postage, while a letter containing even the very slightest enclosure, however small might be its weight, was charged double postage.\*

As may be supposed, evasions of the postal charges and illicit conveyance of letters were then very frequent. In the year 1823 Rowland Hill took a holiday excursion through the lake district of Scotland; and wishing his friends to be informed as to his movements and his health, which was in a weak state, he carried with him a number of old newspapers. The postmark, with its date, showed the place; and though, in those days, newspapers, unless franked, were charged as letters, any one was at liberty, in franking them, to use the name of any peer or member of the House of Commons without his consent; so the postage cost nothing. "I indicated," he writes, "my state of health by selecting names according to previous arrangements; the more Liberal members being taken to indicate that I was better, while Tories were to show that I was falling back. 'Sir Francis Burdett' was to imply vigorous health, while probably 'Lord Eldon' would almost have brought one of my brothers after me in anxiety and alarm." A "dodge" somewhat similar is thus related by Coleridge: "One day, when I had not a shilling I could spare, I was passing by a cottage not far from Keswick, where a letter-carrier was demanding a shilling for a letter, which the woman of the house appeared unwilling to pay, and at last declined to take. I paid the postage; and when the man was out of sight she told me that the letter was from her son, who took that means of letting her know he was well. The letter was then opened and found to be blank! It was not meant to be paid for." Besides these innocent evasions of postage, contraband conveyance of letters was carried on to an enormous extent. In Birmingham it was said that the number of letters distributed by illicit means very greatly exceeded the number distributed by the Post-office.

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\* Whenever the weight reached an ounce the postage was regulated by it, rising by a single postage for every quarter of an ounce.



Over all the kingdom carriers and coach-proprietors were engaged in the conveyance of letters. Once in a carrier's warehouse a bag containing no fewer than 1110 letters was found. Of course seizures were occasionally made by the Post-office authorities, and fines levied; but such seizures bore no proportion to the immense extent of the traffic.

The main cause which turned Rowland Hill's thoughts specially in the direction of Post-office reform was the large surplus in the general revenue which occurred in 1835. He and his brother began speculating on its application in the reduction of duties, and thought naturally that reduction of Post-office charges was as much called for as any other change. Rowland Hill began to investigate the general question of taxation, and, armed by an immense array of Blue-books, to endeavor to get a thorough knowledge of the general state of the Post-office, and to devise the best means of cheapening the conveyance of letters. The main conclusions at which he arrived were: "First, that the number of letters passing through the post would be greatly increased by the decrease of franks and abandonment of illicit conveyance; by the breaking up of one long letter into several shorter ones; by the use of the post for the distribution of circulars and the issue of many circulars hitherto withheld; and, lastly, by an enormous enlargement in the class of letter-writers. Farther, that supposing the public, according to its practice in other cases, only to expend as much in postage as before, the loss to the net revenue would be but small; and again, that such loss, even if large, would be more than compensated for by the powerful stimulus given by low postage to the productive power of the country, and the consequent increase of revenue in other departments. Finally, that while the risk to Post-office revenue was comparatively small, and the chance of eventual gain not inconsiderable, and while the beneficial effect on the general revenue was little less than certain, the adoption of my plan would certainly confer a most important, manifest, and acceptable benefit on the country." These conclusions, and the arguments which led to

them, he embodied in a pamphlet, marked "Private and confidential," which he placed in the hands of the government in January, 1837.

The thoughts of not a few members of Parliament had by this time been directed to the state of the Post-office, mainly by the energetic efforts of Mr. Wallace, the member for Greenock. He had advocated the adoption of weight as a measure of charge, in place of the ridiculous system which regulated it chiefly by the number of enclosures. Moreover, he had proposed that the contract for the construction of mail-coaches should be thrown open to public competition, by the adoption of which measure a saving of more than £17,000 was effected. Through his exertions, a commission of inquiry into the management of the Post-office was appointed in 1835. Doubtless his labors made the Government scan Rowland Hill's plan of penny-postage with more attention than it might otherwise have received. He had several interviews with the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Spring Rice, afterward Lord Monteagle), but no very favorable prospects were held out to him. "I was at least," he says, "made very distinctly aware that government had by no means made up its mind to the adoption of my plan." The circulation of his pamphlet among influential men, however, brought him a good deal into notice. From Mr. Wallace he received a most kind and encouraging letter; and Professor Empson, of Haileybury College, reported to him that he had heard his plans spoken of in Edinburgh, at a dinner at the Lord Advocate's, in the most favorable terms. A still more gratifying event was the request made to him that he should give evidence before the Post-office Commission. The most interesting feature of his examination is his recommendation of the use of stamps. Charles Knight, the publisher, had, a few years before, when the expediency of entirely abolishing the newspaper stamp, and allowing newspapers to pass through the post for one penny each, was under consideration, suggested that the postage on them might be collected by selling stamped wrappers at a penny each. Rowland Hill

recommended that similar stamped covers and stamped sheets of paper should be employed for letters. Letters and newspapers so stamped might be put into the letter-box instead of being delivered to the receiver. The only difficulty he saw in the adoption of this plan was, that persons unaccustomed to write letters might take their letters to the Post-office without having had recourse to a stamp. "It is true that, on presentation of the letter, the receiver, instead of accepting the money as postage, may take it as the price of a cover or band, in which the bringer might immediately enclose the letter and then re-direct it; but the bringer would sometimes be unable to write. Perhaps the difficulty might be obviated by using a piece of paper quite large enough to bear the stamp, and covered at the back with a glutinous wash, which the bringer might, by applying a little moisture, attach to the back of the letter, so as to avoid the necessity for re-directing it." Thus we see that the adhesive stamp, now of well-nigh universal use, was originally devised as a mere expedient for exceptional cases.

The publication in 1837 of Rowland Hill's pamphlet, "Post-office Reforms," which had been hitherto only privately circulated, served to draw public attention very largely to his plan. Many letters of encouragement and praise reached the author; petitions in favor of his scheme were presented to the House of Lords and the House of Commons; and various associations were formed to carry it through. At the same time it was received with contempt by the Post-office authorities, the Earl of Lichfield, then Postmaster-general, declaring that of all the wild and visionary schemes which he had ever heard or read of, it was the most extraordinary. About the end of the year, however, Rowland Hill was able to declare, in a new edition of his pamphlet, that although his plan, with all its estimates, had been before the public for several months, and though both had been submitted, not only to the general inquirer, but to the scrutinizing examination of those who had most opportunity for acquiring knowledge on the subject, no statement had

appeared which invalidated any one of the calculations. In the end of November a Parliamentary committee was appointed to inquire into the feasibility of a reduction of the rates of postage, and especially to examine into the mode recommended for charging and collecting postage advocated in Rowland Hill's pamphlet. This committee commenced its sittings in the spring of 1838, and sat no fewer than sixty-two days. Much curious and interesting information was given before it, particularly as to the illicit conveyance of letters. For example, Mr. Maury, President of the American Chamber of Commerce, related that when arrangements had been completed for the establishment of regular steam navigation between Liverpool and New York, the postmaster, expecting to have a large despatch of letters to provide for, was careful to furnish himself with a bag of ample dimensions; but, to his astonishment, received only five letters in all, though by the first steamer at least 10,000 letters were in fact sent, all in one bag, which was opened at the office of the consignee of the ship. Among other topics discussed were the practicability of payment in advance, of which most witnesses from the Post-office were very doubtful, though they recognized the advantage of the arrangement; and charging by weight, which, strange to say, was stoutly resisted. The final result of the committee's deliberations was that, by the casting vote of the chairman, Mr. Wallace, two resolutions were passed—one recommending a uniform rate of inland postage irrespective of distance, and the other the fixing of the single rate at twopence. That the country at large was favorable to Rowland Hill's plan was by this time becoming evident to all. The newspaper Press in general supported it, the *Times* in particular lending it the weight of its great and powerful influence. "Such," it said, "is the degree of conviction which is carried to all who have bestowed any thought on it, that the only question is—and it is asked universally—Will the ministers have the honesty and courage to try it? On a review of the public feeling which it has called forth from men of all parties, sects, and conditions



of life, it may well be termed the cause of the whole people of the United Kingdom against the small coterie of place-holders in St. Martin's-le-Grand and its dependencies."

In May, 1839, a deputation, including one hundred and fifty members of Parliament, waited upon Lord Melbourne, then Premier, and urged the adoption of the plan. Among the speakers was Daniel O'Connell, who eloquently said: "Consider, my lord, that a letter to Ireland and the answer back would cost thousands upon thousands of my poor and affectionate countrymen considerably more than a fifth of their week's wages. They are too poor to find out secondary conveyances, and if you shut the Post-office to them, which you do now, you shut out warm hearts and generous affections from home, kindred, and friends." Lord Melbourne gave the deputation an encouraging reply; and but three weeks later Rowland Hill received a note informing him that "the penny postage is to be granted." In July the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in bringing forward his Budget, proposed the adoption of uniform penny postage. This resolution was finally carried by a majority of 102, and a bill for establishing penny postage was immediately brought in. It got through the Lower House without a division, and was carried through the Lords with equal facility — mainly, probably, owing to the weighty support it received from the Duke of Wellington, who expressed an opinion "that that which was called Mr. Rowland Hill's plan was, if it were adopted exactly as proposed, of all plans that most likely to be successful;" and concluded by saying, "I shall, though with great reluctance, vote for the bill, and I earnestly recommend you to do likewise." "Thus," says Rowland Hill, with pardonable pride, "in little more than three years from the time when I entered seriously upon my investigations, and in little more than two years and a half from my first application to government, this measure, so bold in its innovation and paradoxical in its policy as to be met in the onset with the ridicule and scorn of those to whom the public naturally looked as best qualified to judge of its value, had become



law." A gratifying testimony of the esteem in which his services were held by the public was at this time afforded him by his being presented at Wolverhampton with a handsome silver candelabrum, for his labors "as the founder and able advocate of the plan of universal penny postage."

In order to carry out the plan, which implied an entire reorganization of the postal service, it was apparent to the government that they would have to engage Rowland Hill, its originator. At first he was offered a salary of £500, with an engagement for two years only. This very shabby proposal he indignantly declined. He was then offered a place at the Treasury, with a salary of £1500 a year, his employment to be secured for two years certain. This offer he saw fit to accept, though not a little vexed about the two years' engagement, and much disappointed that his place was at the Treasury, and not at the Post-office. With characteristic self-confidence he told Mr. Baring, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that he might put him where he liked, but that he should end by being Secretary to the Post-office. He entered on his new duties in September, and immediately began a stringent inquiry into the practical working of the Post-office, in the course of which he found himself, as often afterward, not a little hampered by official jealousy.

In the *Quarterly Review* for October, 1839, appeared an article on "Post-office Reform," from the pen of John Wilson Croker, many parts of which are amusing when read in the light of events that have happened since. It commences by saying "that the sudden vote in the House of Commons on the 12th of July last seems to us one of the most inconsiderate *jumps in the dark* ever made by that very inconsiderate assembly." "On the whole," the writer goes on to remark, "we feel that, so far from the *exclusive* benefits to 'order, morals, and religion' which Mr. Hill and the committee put forward, there is at least as great a chance of the contrary mischief, and that the proposed penny post might perhaps be more justly characterized as 'sedition made easy.'" Doubtless Mr. Croker,

with his peculiar views, would have considered this remark powerfully corroborated, if he had seen a letter Richard Cobden wrote to Rowland Hill in 1846, saying that but for the penny post the Anti-Corn-law League would not have carried its purpose. But fears of seditious conspiracies were not the only ones that vexed the mind of Mr. Croker. "After all," he writes, "no one can doubt that the low postage will considerably increase the amount of general correspondence, and nowhere, we believe, so much as in letters of friendship among the middle and lower classes—a great advantage, a great increase to individual happiness, and in some cases, perhaps, a preservation from evil, by maintaining the family tie; but even this advantage will not be unmixed. Will clerks write only to their fathers, and girls to their mothers? Will not letters of romance or love, intrigue or mischief, increase in at least equal proportions? Does any rational mind doubt that there will be, on this point of the question, a balance of good and evil?" With regard to the question of stamping, the same sapient authority remarks that "*prepayment* by means of a stamp or stamped cover is universally admitted to be quite the reverse of convenient, foreign to the habits of the people, and likely, however slight the prepayment may be, to excite some dissatisfaction in the poorer classes, and occasion difficulties to all." This foolish attack of the *Quarterly* on the penny postage scheme—of the ability and common-sense of which the reader may judge by the specimens we have given—was ably answered by Matthew Davenport Hill, brother of Rowland, in the *Edinburgh Review* for January, 1840.

As a sort of preparatory step to the adoption of penny postage, and as a test which might be expected to give some indication of how it would succeed, it was determined to fix fourpence as the maximum inland rate on and after December 5, 1839. Though this was a very low charge as compared with the charges previously current, it was received in general by the public with anything but gratitude. They had been eagerly expecting the immediate introduction of penny postage;

and the fourpenny rate made many fear that it was not intended to grant any farther reduction. Even Rowland Hill did not escape censure in the clamor that arose against the government, but was charged in some of the newspapers with having conspired against the cause. In the midst of this general discontent there were not wanting some who hailed the reduction as a great benefit. A poor Irishman, who brought a letter to the chief office, with one shilling and fourpence for the postage, upon having the shilling returned to him, with the information that the fourpence was all that was required, broke out in acknowledgment to the window-clerk with, "God bless your honor, and thank you!" The results of the experiment on the fourpenny rate were on the whole satisfactory. In England and Wales the increase was 33 per cent.; in Scotland, 51; in Ireland, 52. After the plan had been a week in operation it was decided that the privilege of franking should be abolished, and penny postage introduced on January 10, 1840. "On this day," says his biographer, "so long as his health lasted, the great postal reformer loved to gather his friends around him." When the day of the introduction was over it was found that from the chief office 112,000 letters had been despatched, of which all but 13,000 or 14,000 were prepaid. Though, as may be imagined, on the first evening of the one penny rate the Post-office was in an extraordinary state of bustle and confusion, three hearty cheers were given by the crowd there assembled for Rowland Hill, and for the officers of the establishment.

With the introduction of penny postage, Rowland Hill's difficulties, so far from being over, may almost be said to have been only beginning. When it was introduced stamps were not employed, the postage being handed to the receiver. Designs were invited for stamps and for stamped covers and paper (which, as we have seen, were expected to be much more largely employed than adhesive stamps). Toward the end of April, Mulready's design for stamped envelopes, together with the stamp intended for Post-office use, were formally approved.

No sooner was the envelope (which had been spoken of very favorably by the Royal Academicians, to whom it was shown before being issued) in the hands of the public than it was assailed with a pitiless storm of ridicule. A daily newspaper, with great cleverness and no small portion of truth, described it thus: "In the centre, at the top, sits Britannia, throwing out her arms, as if in a tempest of fury, at four winged urchins, intended to represent post-boys, letter-carriers, or Mercuries, but who, instead of making use of their wings and flying, appear in the act of striking out or swimming. . . . On the right of Britannia there are a brace of elephants, all backed and ready to start, when some Hindoo, Chinese, Arabic, or Turkish merchants, standing quietly by, have closed their bargains and correspondence. . . . On the left of Britannia, who looks herself very much like a termagant, there is an agglomeration of native Indians, missionaries, Yankees, and casks of tobacco, with a sprinkling of foliage, and the rotten stem of a tree, not forgetting a little terrier dog inquisitively gliding between the legs of the mysterious conclave to see the show. . . . Considering the infinite drollery of the whole, the curious assortment of figures and faces, the harmonious *mélange* of elephants, mandarins' tails, Yankee beavers, naked Indians, squatted with their hind-quarters in front, Cherokee chiefs, with feathered tufts, shaking missionaries by the hand; casks of Virginia threatening the heads of young ladies devouring love-letters; and the old woman in the corner, with hands uplifted, blessing Lord Lichfield and his Rowland for the saving grace of elevenpence out of a shilling, and valuing her husband's calamity or death as nothing in comparison with such an economy—altogether, it may be said, this is a wondrous combination of pictorial genius, after which 'Phiz' and Cruikshank must hide their diminished heads, for they can hardly be deemed worthy now of the inferior grade of associates and aspirants for Academic honors." So complete was the public rejection of the Mulready envelope, that nearly all the great number prepared for issue had to be destroyed. Stamps were issued on



the 1st of May, and were at once enthusiastically received, £2500 worth being sold on the first day of issue. Great fears were entertained of their forgery; happily, with very little foundation. A much more serious danger arose from the difficulty of making the obliteration of the stamp complete and effectual. At this time all the penny stamps were black, the obliterating ink being red. It was soon found that the red ink was inefficacious, as it could be removed with comparative ease, and black ink was substituted. After many trials, and with no small difficulty, a kind of obliterating ink was invented, which proved practically irremovable when impressed on stamps printed with colored ink. As may be supposed, while Rowland Hill was at the Post-office he received many suggestions from outsiders, most of them of little or no value, and such as made him appreciate better than he had formerly done the coldness with which external advice is received by those in office. One recommendation made to him by Captain Basil Hall, in December, 1840, is worth noticing, as probably the first mention of what is now an almost universal practice. He wrote to him saying that it seemed to him the envelopes might be rendered much more convenient if a small lick of the gum used for the stamps was put at the angle where the wafer or wax was placed, "so that an envelope might be closed without the trouble of a wafer, or the double 'toil and trouble' of a seal—implying lucifer-matches, tapers, and wax."

Other improvements—of a minor nature, indeed, compared to penny postage, but still far from unimportant—were effected by Rowland Hill in 1840. Previous to the introduction of the one penny rate it had been the practice to register gratuitously all letters containing articles of value. With the great increase of correspondence this had been abandoned; but, as it was a very necessary measure, it was found essential to revive it. Though Rowland Hill earnestly wished that the charge for registration should on no account exceed sixpence, his wishes were overruled, and a uniform rate of one shilling appointed. To compensate in part for this, the fees for money-orders were



reduced; the rate being fixed at threepence for any sum not exceeding two pounds, and sixpence for any higher sum up to five pounds.

Though the leaders of the Tory party had not resisted the introduction of penny postage, Rowland Hill was not without fears as to its safety and as to the duration of his tenure of office, should they come into power, especially since during the first year of the reduced postal rate the net revenue of the Post-office was only £500,000, as compared with £1,600,000 the previous year. In one respect his fears proved only too well-founded. On the accession of Sir Robert Peel's administration to power in 1842, Sir Robert, in announcing his financial measures, stated that he did not intend to advance the rate, at least at present. He also spoke highly of the social advantages of penny postage, and expressed an opinion that the measure had not yet had a full trial. This was so far satisfactory; but Rowland Hill soon found he had been right in his suspicions that under a Tory government his services would not be duly appreciated. After having for some time had his authority contemned, and his suggestions treated with silent contumely, he was curtly informed that, as the period had arrived when his farther assistance might be safely dispensed with, his services would not be required after September, 1842. This indignity stung his proud and sensitive nature to the quick. He recalled how much he had done, and how much there was yet to do, which could only be effected by one to whom the success of penny postage was a matter of vital concern, and thought with bitterness how little his past services had been esteemed, and how feebly and inadequately the reforms he had introduced would be carried out by the Post-office authorities, who were almost to a man the steadfast opponents of penny postage. The sympathy of many public and private friends did something to mitigate his vexation. Richard Cobden wrote to him that he must be remunerated for the work he had done. "The laborer," said he, "is worthy of his hire. The country is in your debt. An organized plan is alone

necessary to insure you a national subscription of a sum of money sufficient to re-imburse you for time, trouble, and annoyance incurred and expended in your great social revolution." He also received a characteristic letter from Thomas Hood, in which the humorist remarked that he had seen so many instances of folly and ingratitude similar to those Rowland Hill had met with, that it would never surprise him to hear of the railway people some day, finding their trains running on so well, proposing to discharge the engines. In Parliament his cause was taken up warmly by many distinguished men, and, in 1843, a motion was made by Sir Thomas Wilde for a select committee, "to inquire into the progress which had been made in carrying into effect the recommendations of Mr. Rowland Hill for Post-office improvement; and whether the farther carrying into effect of such recommendations, or any of them, will be beneficial to the country." This motion was, in a slightly amended form, agreed to by government; and a committee was appointed, of whom, however, six only were on the Liberal side. Before this committee Rowland Hill was examined, and gave much important information. In order that a full statement of his case might be before the public, he drew up a pamphlet, entitled "State and Prospects of Penny Postage," which appeared in 1844. The following passage from it is interesting:\* "It is a curious fact that, from the institution of the Post-office to the present time, no important improvement has had its origin in that establishment. The town-posts originated with a Mr. Dockwra, shortly before the Restoration; the cross-posts with Mr. Allen, about the middle of last century; and the substitution of mail-coaches for horse and foot posts was, as is well known, the work of Mr. Palmer, some thirty years later. It is remarkable that the cases of Dockwra and Palmer bear a considerable resemblance to my own. The opposition to the introduction, and, what is more extraordinary, to the working out and even the continuance of Palmer's

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\* Quoted in "Life of Sir Rowland Hill," vol. ii., p. 9.

plan, is too well known to be dwelt on here; but both these remarkable men saw their plans adopted, were themselves engaged to work them out, and subsequently, on the complaint of the Post-office, were turned adrift by the Treasury." As the committee had been moved for a late period of the session, it gave no opinion for or against Rowland Hill's proposed reforms, on the ground that it had had no time to form one; but merely repeated the evidence and various correspondence, saying it entertained no doubt that both the Treasury and the Post-office would give his proposals the fullest consideration.

About this time Rowland Hill began to look about him for some occupation during his enforced leisure from Post-office duties. He was fortunate enough to be employed in a situation eminently suited to his character and abilities. The affairs of the Brighton Railway Company, which had been grossly mismanaged, were being reorganized, and he was appointed one of the new board of directors into whose hands the task of reorganization was committed. So valuable were his services in this capacity found to be, that in no long time he was unanimously appointed chairman of the company. Under his energetic management great improvements were effected, with very satisfactory financial results. The original value of a share was fifty pounds. When he became first connected with the company it was only thirty-five pounds. When he abandoned his chairmanship for other duties, in 1846, it was seventy-five pounds. He introduced the practice of running excursion and express trains—the latter proceeding at what would now be accounted the slow rate of thirty-four miles an hour. One circumstance of his management brought him, it is probable, some little temporary unpopularity with the railway employés. Whenever a breach of any rule took place the penalty to which the offender had made himself liable was strictly enforced. This strict enforcement of penalties was a principle Rowland Hill acted upon throughout life, carrying it rigorously out alike as school-master, as railway director, and as Secretary to the Post-office. It is easy to see that his habits of order and strict

punctuality must often have made him not a little disagreeable to easy-going people. In his own household everything went on with the regularity of clock-work. His servants were trained to the most thorough-going punctuality. Once he was much troubled with a coachman whom he could not induce to conform to his rules in this respect. Various plans were tried with him, but in vain. "At last," he writes, "it occurred to me to adopt the Post-office rule, under which any one accused of misconduct is called upon to give such written explanation 'as he may desire.' The duty was intrusted to the footman, with instructions to call for explanations in every case of lateness, even when no more than a fraction of a minute, the hall-clock being taken as an indisputable standard. The experiment succeeded so well that in twelve months there were only six cases of lateness, amounting in the aggregate to eight minutes." An anecdote like this gives one more real insight into Rowland Hill's character than pages of description would do. Like so many worthy men who have had in their youth to fight a hard battle against poverty, he was somewhat cold and stern; his really affectionate and generous nature being concealed by a stiff and undemonstrative exterior, which prejudiced many people against him. It is not to be wondered at that, when he reflected how much he had been able to accomplish, in spite of many and great disadvantages of birth and fortune, when he considered what a stern and up-hill journey his path through life had been, he should have regarded with too little tolerance the slips and flaws of those who, though more favored by fortune than he had been, were not endowed with so vigorous and resolute a nature.

In 1846 occurred an event which did much to compensate him for the injustice done him by his dismissal from office. Cobden's suggestion that a public testimonial should be given him had been enthusiastically responded to. In June, 1846, he was presented at a public meeting with a check for £13,000. The amount would have been larger had not individual subscriptions been limited at the outset to ten pounds ten shillings.



In returning thanks for this gratifying proof of public sympathy, Rowland Hill took occasion to review some of the principal results of penny postage, showing how beneficial it had been to this country, and how powerful its influence had been on other nations, its adoption by the British Parliament having led to reductions of postage in Russia, Prussia, Austria, Spain, and the United States of America. Observing the fact that Sir Robert Peel had been a contributor to the testimonial, he thanked him for the honor he had thus done him; but said that had Sir Robert yielded to his entreaties to be allowed, at any pecuniary sacrifice to himself, to work out his own plan—to prove that he had not misled the public as to its results, nor even adopted those sanguine views which in a projector might perhaps be forgiven, however erroneous—his gratitude to him would have been boundless. “But,” he went on to say, “severe as was the disappointment which I felt, and still feel, at being unjustly deprived of all participation in the execution and completion of my own plan—in seeing it left in the hands of gentlemen who feel no interest in its success, and who, I must say, have evinced no peculiar aptitude either for comprehending its principles or for devising and executing the necessary details—even at this moment of severe disappointment, I can truly say that I felt no regret at having embarked in the great work of Post-office improvement.”

When he made the above remarks it is not probable that he expected that he would so soon again “embark in the great work,” as turned out to be the case. About a fortnight after he received the testimonial Sir Robert Peel resigned, and the Liberals returned to power. Rowland Hill had been confident that whenever this event happened his services would be again sought for by government, and his confidence was not misplaced. The great difficulty was to find a suitable situation for him. Remembering how his work had been hampered and impeded formerly, Rowland Hill earnestly pressed on the Postmaster-general, Lord Clanricarde, the propriety of removing Colonel Maberly, the Secretary to the Post-office, to some other



position. Maberly did not regard either penny postage or its originator with any favor, and Rowland Hill was aware that if he were retained in office there would be so many altercations and disputes as to make his position far from an enviable one. To his request for Maberly's removal it was replied that there was no office available for him, save at a lower salary than he was then receiving. Finding that the loss involved amounted to £300 a year, Rowland Hill, to remove this obstacle, offered to give up £300 of the salary which he was to receive, and said that he was ready to accept £1200 instead of £1500, provided only his position was such as would enable him promptly and efficiently to carry out the remaining parts of his plan. To his great surprise and mortification his offer as to salary was caught at, while the accompanying stipulation was disregarded. Colonel Maberly was retained in his old position, and it was proposed that Rowland Hill should take office as Secretary to the Postmaster-general, with a salary of £1200, "thus," as he says, "placing me in a lower position than I had previously occupied at the Treasury." For a time he hesitated greatly whether he should accept the proffered office, and again enter upon a contest which had before tried his energies to the utmost. On consulting with some of his friends, he found that they considered he was bound to return to the Post-office work, having received, as it were, a retaining fee in the public subscription. This view of the subject decided him. He could not disappoint the expectations of those who had so nobly aided him, and he resolved, though with great reluctance, to accept the situation, on the understanding that, if he showed himself possessed of the requisite administrative powers, he should be promoted, at no distant period, to a position of higher authority. He accordingly entered office in the beginning of December, 1846.

Though Rowland Hill felt himself considerably hampered by his not having undivided authority, he effected considerable improvements during the first few years of his tenure of office. After repeated efforts, the Money-order department was placed

entirely under his supervision. In the early days of money-order transactions it was the custom of the Post-office, in cases where an order had been paid to a forged signature, still to pay it to the right party. It was soon found that this practice exposed the Post-office to many frauds. For example, two persons would purposely arrange that an order obtained in favor of one should fall into the hands of the other, and when he, by forging the signature of his accomplice, had obtained payment, his accomplice, applying in his own name, and showing that the signature given was not his, was able to obtain payment a second time. The existing rule was, therefore, rescinded, and provision made that when an order had once been paid, even to the wrong party, no *legal claim* should remain against the Post-office. This rule has been found on the whole to work very well, although sometimes not unattended with hardship, as in a curious instance related by Rowland Hill himself.\* In a large provincial town, a person applied in haste at the post-office, stating that on his way thither he seemed to have dropped an order which he was bringing for payment, at the same time giving in his name, and begging that no order might be paid to that name till his return, as he would go back to his house, to examine whether he might perchance have left it there. Some time after his departure, however, a second person came to the window, saying that Mr. — had recovered the order, having, in fact, left it at home, and had sent him with it to obtain payment, he himself being unexpectedly detained. The clerk, satisfied with this plausible statement, fitting in so well with antecedent circumstances, paid the money accordingly, but was startled a few minutes later by the re-appearance of the first claimant, with a declaration that, as he had not been able to find the order at home, it must, of course, have been lost, and a request that nothing might be done until a new order was obtained. Upon the clerk's reporting what had meanwhile occurred, and mentioning the new rule, the applicant,

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\* "Life," vol. ii., p. 80.

after some remarks not particularly flattering to postal sagacity, announced his intention to appeal in the highest quarter. The decision there made was, that in so extraordinary a case the strict rule should not be fully maintained, but that the department must, nevertheless, be secured from loss. This was thrown in equal shares on the parties immediately concerned, each having shown negligence, the one in losing the order, the other in paying it against injunction.

In 1847 Rowland Hill suggested the establishment of a book post. This was objected to by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, principally on the ground that it would offend the railway interest. Upon the public convenience as well as the moral and political advantages of the proposed arrangement being pointed out to him, he consented to waive his objections, provided that, in the first instance at least, each packet was restricted to a single volume. In February, 1848, the book post was accordingly introduced. At first any writing whatsoever in a posted book made it subject to letter-charge. This restriction, as may easily be imagined, was found to be extremely inconvenient, and it was therefore removed; writing, however, being still restricted to a single page. In course of time this restriction also was withdrawn, and it was made allowable to write anything whatever except a letter. The new facility was often taken advantage of for attempts at evasion of postage, the chief offenders in this way, Rowland Hill ungallantly remarks, being ladies. On one occasion it was found that a hole had been excavated in an old book, leaving not only the binding but several leaves above and below uninjured—and in this hole was concealed a watch. Commenting on this, Rowland Hill observes that, with every desire to give the public all postal facilities, the Post-office authorities were often deterred from doing so by the tricks and evasions which too frequently followed any relaxation of the rules; evasions which, even when detected, and when clearly opposed to the *spirit* and *intention* of the regulation, were sometimes defended—and, owing to the unwillingness of government depart-

ments to risk defeat in a court of justice, successfully defended—on the ground that there was no infraction of the letter of the regulation. The conscientious part of the public, he adds, is little aware how much it suffers from such unscrupulous conduct as this. The establishment of a book post was only part of a larger scheme which Rowland Hill in vain attempted, during his connection with the Post-office, to get introduced. As early as 1842 he had recommended the introduction of a parcels post, but the opposition of the railways remained a constant obstacle to it. This much-needed public convenience still remains a desideratum, but is now being tried in Scotland.

In 1849-'50 occurred an agitation connected with the Post-office which appears to have vexed Rowland Hill as much as any incident in his public career. Its details do not possess much interest now, so a brief notice of it will suffice. He had commenced a systematic reduction of Sunday labor in the provincial post-offices; and, thinking that with whatever inconveniences his improvements might be attended they would be accepted by the public, if accompanied by another measure conferring an equivalent advantage, took steps to achieve a measure which had for some time been under consideration, namely, the transmission of the "forward"\* letters through London on the Sunday, with a view to their delivery on the Monday morning. This arrangement would, it was thought, by giving very considerable accommodation at a small cost of labor, tend to reconcile the public to the cessation of their Sunday deliveries, which were to be stopped. Though it caused the employment on Sunday of only twenty-five additional clerks in London, as a present means of relieving twenty times that number, and though, as he clearly showed, even in the London office, it would in the end yield relief, it was immediately assailed with intense bitterness by many, particu-

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\* "Forward" letters are letters coming from one post-town to another for delivery in a third.



larly by the "Lord's-day Society," who spared no pains in agitating against it, and issued many statements about it which were far from being in accordance with facts. "I could not but think," writes Rowland Hill, with not unnatural acrimony, "that the society, in its zeal for enforcing upon others a strict observance of the fourth commandment, too often deferred to a more convenient season its own observance of the ninth." After having kept all in authority at the Post-office in a state of trouble and anxiety for sixteen months, the agitation gradually subsided, not, however, till it had excited among the employés a spirit of insubordination which it was afterward found difficult to quell.

When Rowland Hill entered on office in 1846 it was with the expectation that he would soon be appointed Secretary, and that Colonel Maberly would be transferred to some other post. In spite of the efforts which, for several years, he made, in season and out of season, to obtain this end, it was not gained till 1854. In that year Colonel Maberly was removed to the Audit-office, and Rowland Hill took his place, with his salary increased to £2000 a year. Now, at length, he was really free to carry out his plans, in which arduous labor he was greatly aided by his youngest brother, Frederick, who had been appointed assistant-secretary in 1851. With the various Postmasters-general under whom he held office till 1860—with Lord Canning, the Duke of Argyll, Lord Colchester, and Lord Elgin—his relations were of the most amicable and friendly kind possible. In 1860 he was made a K.C.B., to his great gratification. In the same year Lord Stanley of Alderley was appointed Postmaster-general, and from him, says Rowland Hill, "I had not the good-fortune to obtain that confidence and support which I had enjoyed with his predecessors." Their main differences seem to have arisen on the question of promotion by merit. Rowland Hill had, with the support and sympathy of his previous chiefs, to a large extent succeeded in doing away with the system of patronage which had hitherto prevailed, and that promotion by merit might have full play,



had established certain rules which had for some years been acted on with the utmost strictness. These rules were set aside by the new Postmaster-general, and hence arose frequent disputes between him and Rowland Hill. The latter was now an old man, with a constitution considerably enfeebled, and was by no means equal to the toil and worry he had endured in former days. He therefore thought it best to resign his office, which he did in 1864. Her Majesty sent a gracious message to the House of Commons, recommending the House to concur in enabling her to grant Sir Rowland Hill the sum of £20,000. Lord Palmerston moved the grant, which was agreed to unanimously. In addition, his full salary of £2000 was awarded to him for life. "He was often," it is said, "in after-years heard to say, with a smile, that in the days of his youth he had eagerly denounced all titles and all pensions, little thinking that he should himself live to receive both one and the other."

The remaining years of Rowland Hill's life were spent in the tranquil enjoyment of well-earned leisure. Many honors and tributes of respect gladdened his old age. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. The University of Oxford conferred on him the degree of D.C.L. But a few short weeks before his death he was presented with the freedom of the City of London—an honor which affected him deeply. "The tears," writes his nephew, "streamed down his venerable face as the gold box containing the resolution of the Court of Common Council was handed to him, and he was scarcely able to utter a word, so deeply touched was he by this last tribute from his countrymen. His answer to the deputation had to be read by his son." To the last Rowland Hill took a keen interest in public affairs, especially, of course, in such as concerned the Post-office. The reduction of the postal rate of newspapers, and the introduction of the half-penny stamp and post-cards in 1870, he regarded as steps in the right direction. At half-past four o'clock, on the morning of August 27, 1879, he passed unconsciously away. For some time he had been in

failing health, and his death had been expected for some days before the event took place.

In recording his death all the Press of the country, of whatever shade of political opinion, combined in doing honor to the memory of a man to whose energy and enterprise we owe the great boon of penny postage. A "Rowland Hill Mansion-house Memorial Fund" was started, to which subscriptions rapidly poured in. With the money thus collected, it is intended to place a bust of Sir Rowland Hill in Westminster Abbey, and to form a fund for the benefit of Post-office employés. In his native town of Kidderminster a statue, to which some 200,000 persons in all parts of the world contributed, has been erected in memory of Sir Rowland Hill. It was unveiled on June 22, 1881. Sir Rupert Kettle gave the inaugural address, and in the course of his remarks said that they were offering a tribute of honor to a great philanthropist, whom those present were proud to call a townsman, and who, by his fertile genius, his mastery of organization, and his indomitable perseverance, freed the written communications of man with man from the fetters government had unwisely imposed upon them.

A few statistics will best show the great service Sir Rowland Hill rendered to his country. In 1839 about 106,000,000 of chargeable letters and newspapers were sent through the Post-office. During the twelve months preceding the publication of the report of the Postmaster-general, issued on August 16, 1881, the number of letters delivered in the United Kingdom was 1,176,423,600; while during the same period there were transmitted 122,884,000 post-cards, 248,881,600 book-packets and circulars, and 113,796,100 newspapers. We may mention that of the letters 10,034,546 were registered; 27,000 were posted without any address; and of 5,600,000 which found their way to the Dead Letter Office, there were 475,000 which it was found impossible to deliver or return. The British public is hard to please, and when the least hitch or oversight occurs in the Post-office complaints are loud. But when

one considers the vastness and complexity of the machinery of the Post-office, one is constrained to wonder, not that slight errors should occasionally occur, but that errors should happen so rarely, and should be, generally speaking, of so little importance.\*

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\* In the preparation of this chapter I have been greatly indebted to the interesting and elaborate "Life of Sir Rowland Hill," by his nephew, George Birkbeck Hill, D.C.L.





## THE REPEAL OF THE CORN-LAWS.

*RICHARD COBDEN, JOHN BRIGHT, C. P. VILLIERS.*

IN 1776 Adam Smith published his great work, the "Wealth of Nations." Few books, if any, have influenced so powerfully the minds of statesmen, or have done so much to alter the policy of nations, as this treatise of the recluse and absent-minded Glasgow professor. Many of the leading politicians of Smith's time read it with profit and admiration. Burke, the deepest political thinker of his age, delighted to find it corroborate not a few of the conclusions which his own subtle intellect had already worked out. Pitt, the most powerful Prime-minister England has ever seen, studied it while at college, and showed, when in office, that he had not done so in vain. In a speech on the Budget, delivered in 1792, he referred to Adam Smith as "an author now, unhappily, no more, whose extensive knowledge of detail and depth of philosophical research will, I believe, furnish the best solution to every question connected with the history of commerce or with the systems of political economy." The great object of Smith, in his speculations on trade, was, in the words of Dugald Stewart, "to illustrate the provision made by Nature in the principles of the human mind for a gradual and progressive augmentation in the means of national wealth, and to demonstrate that the most effectual plan for advancing a people to greatness is to maintain that order of things which Nature has pointed out, by allowing every man, as long as he observes the rules of justice, to pursue his own interest in his own way, and to bring both his industry and his capital into the freest competition with those of his



RICHARD COBDEN.



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fellow-citizens. Every system of policy which endeavors, either by extraordinary encouragements to draw toward a particular species of industry a greater share of the capital of the society than what would naturally go to it, or by extraordinary restraints to force from a particular species of industry some share of the capital which would otherwise be employed in it, is, in reality, subversive of the great purpose which it means to promote." Though strongly advocating free-trade, Adam Smith was far from anticipating that it would be adopted by this country. "To expect, indeed," he says, "that the freedom of trade should ever be entirely restored in Great Britain is as absurd as to expect that an Oceana or Utopia should ever be established in it. Not only the prejudice of the public, but, what is much more unconquerable, the private interests of many individuals, irresistibly oppose it." In Smith's time, and for many years afterward, this was the opinion held by the vast majority of people. It is true that, as far back as 1783, Lord Shelburne, familiar with the teaching of Adam Smith and the French economists, denounced monopoly as always unwise, but for no nation under heaven so unwise as for England; and said that all that we ought to covet upon earth was free-trade and open markets. But no minister of the crown was found willing to act up to Shelburne's theory till more than sixty years after. Heavy taxes continued to be laid upon what, above all things, ought not to be taxed—the nation's food-supply; healthy competition in manufactures was prohibited by large import duties; the wealth of the country was thought to be increased by attention being paid to the petty and isolated welfare of single classes rather than to the welfare of the people at large. To carry into practical effect the doctrines long before taught by Adam Smith, to free the food of the people from artificial restrictions, and to promote freedom of trade in all departments of commerce, was the work of Richard Cobden and his associates in the Anti-Corn-law League.

Though corn-laws, of a more or less vexatious nature, ex-

isted in England from a comparatively early period, it will be sufficient for our purpose to begin with the Corn-law of 1815. When the war came to a close foreign grain began to pour in large quantities into our ports, and of course prices came down rapidly. In 1812 wheat had fetched 122*s.* 8*d.* a quarter; in 1815 it had fallen to 63*s.* 8*d.* Immediately the cry went up from the land-owners that foreign competition would ruin them; the cry was echoed by the farmers, whose rents had been fixed on the supposition that the high prices they had been obtaining during the war would continue; and the aid of Parliament was sought to protect the "agricultural interest." In 1815 a bill was introduced providing that the importation of corn should be prohibited whenever the price fell below 80*s.* a quarter, except corn from the British colonies, which was allowed to come in whenever the average price was 67*s.* As the landlord interest greatly predominated in both Houses, the bill was carried by large majorities, though it encountered strenuous opposition from many who saw that to pass it was an act of glaring injustice and selfishness. A masterly protest (said to have been drawn up by Lord Grenville), subscribed by ten peers, was entered on the Journals of the House of Lords. "We think" (so ran their lordships' third reason of dissent) "that the expectations of ultimate benefit from this measure are founded on a delusive theory. We cannot persuade ourselves that this law will ever contribute to produce plenty, cheapness, or steadiness of price. So long as it operates at all, its effects must be the opposite of these. Monopoly is the parent of scarcity, of dearth, and of uncertainty. To cut off any of the sources of supply can only tend to lessen its abundance; to close against ourselves the cheapest market for any commodity must enhance the price at which we purchase it; and to confine the consumer of corn to the produce of his own country is to refuse to ourselves the benefit of that provision which Providence itself has made for equalizing to man the variations of climate and of seasons."

By the manufacturers, and indeed by all classes except those

directly benefited by it, the Corn-law of 1815 was execrated. It was the cause of much suffering among the people, and led to various public expressions of popular indignation, which were met by that stern repression which was then considered the best mode of redressing grievances. The shameful "Peterloo massacre," with the details of which all readers of history are familiar, was only an example on a large scale of what was every day done on a small. Besides its evil effects on the community at large, the Corn-law did not answer the hopes of its promoters. It was expected by the land-owners that the effect of the act of 1815 would be to keep the price of wheat steady at or about 80s. a quarter. These hopes were so far from being realized that, while the Corn-law of 1815 continued to exist, the average price of wheat was only about 58s. Of course the farmers were the heaviest losers by this, as their rents had been fixed on the supposition that the price of wheat would average 80s.

In 1822, under the administration of Lord Liverpool, an act was passed which made a nominal, but only a nominal, modification of the act of 1815. By this new Corn-law importation was allowed whenever the prices were: for wheat, 70s.; for rye, peas, and beans, 46s.; for barley, 35s.; and for oats, 25s. per quarter. A duty of 17s. per quarter for wheat (and other rates in proportion for other grain) was to be payable during the first three months of importation, and 12s. thereafter. This act remained a dead letter, owing to the fact that during its existence the prices were never so high as to bring it into operation. In 1828 it was replaced by the "sliding-scale," introduced while Canning was Prime-minister, of which the following shows the leading features:

When the average price of wheat was 36s. the duty was 50s. 8d. per quarter.

"	"	"	46s.	"	40s. 8d.	"
"	"	"	56s.	"	30s. 8d.	"
"	"	"	62s.	"	24s. 8d.	"
"	"	"	72s.	"	2s. 8d.	"
"	"	"	73s. or over,		1s. 0d.	"

The duties on the other descriptions of grain were adjusted according to their relative value to that of wheat. This act, though certainly less stringent than its predecessors, was far from satisfactory. Practically, it was found that foreign wheat did not come into the English markets until the home price exceeded 70s. a quarter; so that the "sliding-scale" was of little or no benefit to the poverty-stricken laborer or artisan. With all its faults, it remained intact for three years after Richard Cobden and his associates had organized the Anti-Corn-law League.

Of the many pioneers of Cobden in his good work three seem to deserve special mention. Colonel Perronet Thompson, an accomplished mathematician, a clear and forcible writer, and an ardent defender of the rights of the people, as early as 1827 published his "Corn-law Catechism," in which he probed, in a very trenchant and uncompromising style, the weak points in the armor of the protectionists. To the end of his life Thompson, both by tongue and pen, was one of the foremost champions of free-trade. Ebenezer Elliott, in his well-known "Corn-law Rhymes," the first instalment of which was published in 1831, gave utterance to the abhorrence felt toward the Corn-laws by the large class to which he belonged in verse which, if sometimes overheated and frenzied, rarely fails to bear the marks of a genuine poet. One of the most popular and one of the most bitter of Elliott's pieces is that entitled "Caged Rats," which we quote, as showing how much the Corn-laws did to stir up hatred between the landed interest and the manufacturing population :

"Ye coop us up and tax our bread,  
And wonder why we pine ;  
But ye are fat, and round, and red,  
And filled with tax-bought wine.  
Thus twelve rats starve while three rats thrive  
(Like you on mine and me),  
When fifteen rats are caged alive,  
With food for nine and three.



“Hark! Havoc’s torch begins to glow—  
The ending is begun;  
Make haste! Destruction thinks ye slow;  
Make haste to be undone!  
Why are ye called ‘My Lord’ and ‘Squire,’  
While fed by mine and me,  
And wringing food, and clothes, and fire  
From bread-taxed misery?

“Make haste, slow rogues! *prohibit* trade—  
*Prohibit* honest gain;  
Turn all the good that God hath made  
To fear, and hate, and pain;  
Till beggars all, assassins all,  
All cannibals we be,  
And death shall have no funeral  
From shipless sea to sea.”

William Cobden, that strange mixture of shrewd common-sense and the wildest extravagance, of Radicalism and High Tory proclivities, also, in 1833, in his *Weekly Register*, gave the opponents of the Corn-laws the advantage of his not inconsiderable influence. Among the working-classes, the advocates of the “People’s Charter,” who were at one time unquestionably a power in the state, excited a strong feeling against the Corn-laws. Singularly enough, the Chartists became, as we shall afterward see, next to the land-owners, the most formidable opponents of the Anti-Corn-law League.

We now come to the man whose name is and always will be by far the most celebrated among the apostles of free-trade. Richard Cobden was born on June 3, 1804, at a farm-house called Dunford, near Midhurst, in Sussex, in which district his ancestors had resided for many generations, engaged partly in trade, partly in agriculture. His father, described as an amiable and kind-hearted man, was a farmer. He died while Richard was a child, leaving little behind him, for, partly owing to his want of business habits, he had not prospered in his occupation. “My father,” said Cobden, in a speech at Norwich in 1843, “lost his property as a tenant-farmer, and I fled from

the family occupation to a manufacturing district, in hopes of finding that independence which was denied to me in the more preferable pursuit of farming." The educational advantages enjoyed by Cobden in his youth were very limited. When he had for some years attended the Grammar-school at Midhurst, where his mother had removed after her husband's death, he was, in his fifteenth or sixteenth year, sent to London, to the warehouse of Messrs. Partridge & Price, in Eastcheap. One of the partners in this firm was his uncle, and is handed down to fame as having, when he observed the lad's fondness for study, solemnly warned him against indulging in such a taste, as likely to prove a fatal obstacle to his success in commercial life. Fortunately, the warning passed unheeded. In his spare hours Cobden continued to study diligently, and to make ample use of the store of books to which he found access in the London Institution.

When about twenty years of age, Cobden, to supply a vacancy, for a short time took the duty of a commercial traveller, and proved an eminently successful one. Becoming desirous to establish a business of his own, he entered, in 1830, into partnership with two young men, Messrs. Sheriff & Gillet, and purchased the calico-printing establishment of Messrs. Fort, calico-printers, at Sabden, near Clitheroe. The firm of Sheriff, Gillet, & Cobden prospered, and soon branch establishments were started in London and Manchester. Of the latter, Cobden, about 1831, went to take charge, and thus began his connection with the city which has become so closely associated with his name.

While sedulously attending to business Cobden did not neglect other and more elevated occupations. He watched with keen and eager interest the state of public affairs, and employed part of his leisure in committing to paper his reflections on them. In 1835 appeared his first pamphlet, "England, Ireland, and America. By a Manchester Manufacturer"—a production advocating the same principles of peace, non-intervention, and free-trade, to which he always remained steadfast.

In 1835 also he took a three months' tour to America, during which he collected much valuable information. In 1836 he published his second pamphlet, "Russia." It was intended mainly as a refutation of the Russophobic doctrines then eagerly proclaimed by David Urquhart, but it contained also a trenchant attack on the whole system of foreign policy in vogue at the time. Besides their value as political studies, these pamphlets possess great literary merit. "They have," writes Mr. John Morley, "a ringing clearness, a genial vivacity, a free and confident mastery of expression, which can hardly be surpassed. Cobden is a striking instance against a favorite plea of the fanatics of Latin and Greek. They love to insist that a collegian's scholarship is the great source and fountain of a fine style. It would be nearer the truth to say that our classical training is more aptly calculated to destroy the qualities of good writing and fine speaking than any other system that could possibly have been contrived. . . . What is striking in Cobden is that, after a lost and wasted childhood, a youth of drudgery in a warehouse, and an early manhood passed amid the rather vulgar associations of the commercial traveller, he should, at the age of one-and-thirty, have stepped forth the master of a written style which, in boldness, freedom, correctness, and persuasive moderation, was not surpassed by any man then living. He had taken pains with his mind, and had been a diligent and extensive reader; but he had never studied language for its own sake."\*

In 1836-'37, Cobden, being in weak health, travelled for some time in Spain, Turkey, and Egypt. Returning home, he interested himself much in local politics, and became a conspicuous member of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. It appears to have been about this time that Cobden's attention was specially directed to the question of the Corn-laws. Mr. Henry Ashworth, in his interesting volume, "Recollections of Richard Cobden and the Anti-Corn-law League,"

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\* "Cobden's First Pamphlets," in *Fortnightly Review* for May, 1861.

relates that in 1837, while he and Cobden were attending the meeting of the British Association at Liverpool, Cobden, as they were walking quietly together one night, stopped him and said, abruptly, "I'll tell you what we will do: we'll use the Chamber of Commerce for an agitation to repeal the Corn-law." Mr. Ashworth replied that it could not be done, as the rules of the Chamber would not admit of it, and that the subscriptions to the Chamber would be inadequate for the purpose. Therefore the agitation, if undertaken, must be independent, and must be provided with funds raised for the special purpose. Cobden seemed disappointed, and said, "Well, my income is so safe, that I would not give any one five per cent. to insure it, and I am determined to put forth my strength for the repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws."

The determination thus expressed was nobly acted on. Having once put his hand to the plough, Cobden never for a single moment looked back. Through evil report and through good report, whether carrying on the work against overwhelming odds, in the face of the powerful opposition of the landed interest and the indifference or dislike of most of the educated classes; or whether, exalted into the position of a popular hero, he had banquets held in his honor, as the man who had brought about freedom of trade, and so saved thousands from misery and starvation; he remained the same simple, earnest-minded champion of the doctrines he believed to be true, not discouraged by failure, not unduly elated by success. It would be foolish to deny that not a few of the manufacturers who supported the agitation against the Corn-laws did so for purely selfish reasons. Cobden's bitterest opponent never dared to say that he was liable to a reproach of this sort. To carry on the warfare against the Corn-laws he abandoned the care of a business which was yielding him £8000 or £10,000 per annum, and cheerfully for seven eventful years devoted his talents, his time, and his money to the cause. Mr. John Bright, speaking at the unveiling of the Cobden statue at Bradford, in 1877, gave a striking instance of how constantly and how

intensely the subject of the Corn-laws occupied Cobden's mind. In 1841 Mr. Bright's wife died. "At that time," he said, "I was at Leamington, and on the day when Mr. Cobden called upon me—for he happened to be there at the time on a visit to some relative—I was in the depth of grief, I might almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my home had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, 'There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now,' he continued, 'when the first paroxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest until the Corn-law is repealed.'"

Mr. Bright, like Cobden, was one of the first members of the Anti-Corn-law League, of whose origin we have now to speak. In September, 1838, as Dr. Bowring, an ardent free-trader, was passing through Manchester, he was asked by Mr. A. Prentice, the editor of the *Manchester Times*, and the future historian of the League, to speak at a meeting which was to be held to discuss the Corn-laws. By his vigorous denunciations of them he excited great enthusiasm, and before the meeting (at which about sixty gentlemen were present) broke up it was resolved to form a Manchester Anti-Corn-law Association. In the *Manchester Times* of October 13, 1838, appeared a list of thirty-eight gentlemen (one of whom was John Bright), as "Provisional Committee of the Manchester Anti-Corn-law Association." A week after a supplementary list of thirty-one names, including that of Richard Cobden, appeared. This Manchester Association was the nucleus from which the great National Anti-Corn-law League developed.

In the last month of 1838 a meeting of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce was held to consider the effect of the law on the importation of corn, and, if thought advisable, to



petition Parliament for its repeal. Two petitions were brought forward, one seeking the modification of the duties; the other drawn up by Mr. Cobden, Mr. J. B. Smith, and Mr. Ashworth, praying for "the repeal of all laws relating to the importation of foreign corn and other foreign articles of subsistence." After a keen and prolonged discussion, the latter petition was carried by a majority of six to one. The reports of the discussion which were published in the newspapers attracted considerable attention throughout the country, and helped the cause of the Manchester Association.

On January 10, 1839, several of the members of the Chamber of Commerce who had supported the petition for the total repeal of the Corn-laws met at the York Hotel, Manchester, "to consider the proper mode of carrying forward the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-law Association, in a manner commensurate with the magnitude of the obstacles to be surmounted, and worthy of the object for which it was established." Cobden urged those present to invest a part of their property, in order to save the rest from confiscation, and subscriptions were at once put down for £1800—an amount raised in course of a month to over £6000. With this meeting the work of the Anti-Corn-law League—a name not assumed till some time after—may be said to have fairly begun. Other associations of the kind were already in existence, but they were too small, both in influence and in money-power, to produce any great result. What was wanted was a great national organization which should weld into one all the scattered agencies that were working for the repeal of the Corn-laws, and this want the League supplied.

In order that, to use an expression of Cobden's, "the country might be educated," lecturers were engaged to propagate the principles of the League, pamphlets were distributed; and in April, 1839, the publication of the *Anti-Corn-law Circular*, which soon attained a circulation of 15,000 copies weekly, was begun. In signal contrast to the Chartists, the League conducted its work in a spirit of strict order and obedience to the



JOHN BRIGHT.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
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law. Speaking on January 27, 1881, in reply to one of the irrepressible Irish members, who had compared the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-law League to those of the Land League, Mr. Bright, in the House of Commons, said: "The honorable member for Tralee, I understand, quotes from speeches of mine in connection with the agitation I was at one time associated with—that of the Anti-Corn-law League—for the abolition of what was called protection, which was, in point of fact, whenever there was a bad harvest, a periodical famine for the poor people of this country. The honorable member wanted to show that the two cases were parallel; that in point of fact our League was the same sort of thing, not only in its constitution but in its effects, as the League with which he is connected. I venture to say this, that the only likeness between them is in the name, which, I suppose, they have stolen from us. From 1839 to 1846 our agitation was continued, and no man ever heard any of the recognized leaders, or lecturers, or speakers of our League say anything that was calculated to bring people to disobey the law and to do violence to their neighbors. Does any one suppose that my right honorable friend, the member for Wolverhampton (Mr. C. P. Villiers), who was then the Parliamentary leader of the agitation, ever uttered the observations and the menaces which we have heard from the bench during the session? . . . There was strong language used. I am not a bit ashamed of strong language. It is often very necessary. I recollect a passage in one of the speeches of one of our friends, the late Mr. Fox, who at a later period sat on this side of the House as member for the borough of Oldham. He said, 'The Corn-law is the harvest of death as well as of the land-owner, and monopoly saith unto corruption, Thou art my brother.' That was a strong expression. But it was true, too, and it did not stimulate any one to violence."

During the year 1839 the League did good work in influencing the mind of the country; it had yet to become a power which would affect the votes of members of Parliament.

Its strong and wide-spread organization was first shown by a banquet held at Manchester on January 15, 1840, to which deputations from many of the large towns were invited. The applications for admission were so numerous that a temporary pavilion had to be erected in Peter Street (the scene of the notorious "Peterloo Massacre") to accommodate the expected guests. Among the speakers were Mr. C. P. Villiers, M.P. (who, since the beginning of the present reign had proposed annually in Parliament a motion in favor of the repeal of the Corn-laws),\* Daniel O'Connell, Sir William Molesworth, James Clay, as well as Cobden and others connected with the League. Full reports of the speeches made were given in many London and provincial papers, and served the purpose of alike disseminating the doctrines of the League, and attracting the attention of the leading members of Parliament to its existence and its popularity.

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\* The great services of Mr. Villiers as leader of the Parliamentary campaign against the Corn-laws were cheerfully acknowledged by Cobden in more than one of his speeches. Thus, speaking at a public meeting held in Covent Garden Theatre on July 3, 1844, he said: "After the narrative which our friend Mr. Villiers has given of the past proceedings of himself and others in the House of Commons, in connection with that great question, the repeal of the Corn-laws, I am sure it will be acceptable to you, as well as pleasant to my own feelings, to express my gratitude, as I am sure you will allow me to do yours, toward that gentleman especially, who, fortunately for us and the country, took possession six years ago of this question in the legislature, and who has so nobly and manfully supported it in spite of all sinister influences, in defiance of all those associations which he himself, as a member of the aristocracy, must have had brought to bear upon him. I thank him in your name, and in behalf of the country, for the consistent course he has followed in advocating this question." In his first speech in the House of Commons, Cobden referred to Mr. Villiers as "the honorable member for Wolverhampton, for whose great and incessant services I, in common with millions of my fellow-countrymen, feel grateful." When the struggle for the repeal was over the electors of South Lancashire united in returning Mr. Villiers to Parliament, as the highest honor they could offer him; but Mr. Villiers preferred to retain his seat for Wolverhampton.



Before the Manchester gathering broke up it was arranged that representatives of various towns and districts should be asked to assemble in London on March 24, 1840. On the 27th of that month a deputation of two hundred delegates waited on Lord Melbourne at the Colonial Office. Having declared their object to be the repeal of the Corn-laws, he replied, "You know that to be impracticable. Foreign nations would not relax their protective duties. If they would consult their own interest it might be otherwise, but the general opinion of the world was against free-trade. To give all first was not the way to commence negotiations for reciprocal advantages. There could be no question that their principle was right; but nations did not always see their own interest." The deputation afterward "interviewed" Sir Robert Peel, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Baring (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), but did not succeed in getting a satisfactory reply from any of them.

On April 1, 1840, Mr. Villiers brought forward his annual motion in favor of the repeal of the Corn-laws in the following terms: "That the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, to take into consideration the act of George IV. regulating the importation of foreign corn." After a protracted debate the motion was rejected by the decisive majority of 123. In the same year, however, a victory of some importance was gained by the free-traders in Parliament. Joseph Hume, that sturdy economist whom no defeats could dishearten and no opposition could put down, obtained a select committee of the House of Commons "to inquire into the several duties levied upon imports into the United Kingdom, and how far these duties are for protection to similar articles, the produce of this country or of the British possessions abroad." The evidence given before the committee was so decidedly opposed to the system then in vogue, and proved so strongly the advantage of free-trade, that Mr. J. B. Smith, the President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, made an abridgment of the committee's report, which the Chamber published for general circulation.

During 1840 the work of the League was carried on with great vigor. Over eight hundred lectures were delivered, chiefly in England, but partly also in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. In addition to this, upward of 300,000 copies of the *Anti-Corn-law Circular* were issued, besides innumerable pamphlets, etc. In the public meetings held by the lecturers of the League the only two opposing elements were the landlords and the Chartists. Some irate protectionist squires hired ruffians to interrupt the lectures; and the Chartists (some of whom were, though they did not know it, under the leadership of hired agents of the protectionist party), seeing that the League was rapidly superseding them in the favor of the working-classes, did their best to disorganize its meetings by moving adverse amendments, by making disturbances, and sometimes, though rarely, by resorting to physical force.

The year 1841 is remarkable as being the first in which Free-trade became a party-cry in Parliament. Early in the session Lord John Russell gave notice that he proposed to introduce a measure abolishing the "sliding-scale," and substituting for it a fixed duty of 8s. per quarter on wheat, 4s. 6d. on barley, and 3s. 4d. on oats. Before the time fixed for the discussion of this proposal came on, Mr. Baring, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced his Budget, in which, to the surprise and consternation of many, he proposed to reduce the duty on foreign timber and on foreign sugar. The duty on colonial timber was then only 10s. a load; that on foreign timber was 55s. Mr. Baring proposed to make the former 20s., the latter 50s. The duty on colonial sugar was 24s. per cwt.; on foreign sugar, 63s. The former he proposed to leave as it was, and to reduce the latter to 36s. Now at length the Conservatives thought they had a good opportunity of ousting the enfeebled ministry of Lord Melbourne. On the 10th of May a debate took place on Lord Sandon's motion, "That, considering the efforts and sacrifices which Parliament and the country have made for the abolition of the slave-trade and slavery, this House is not prepared . . . to adopt the measures proposed by her

Majesty's Government for the reduction of the duty on foreign sugars." A prolonged debate of eight nights ensued, in course of which Sir Robert Peel significantly remarked, "It is not the measures themselves which you introduce that are injurious, but they lose grace and favor in the public eye when it is believed that they do not spring from your deliberate will, are not formed in consequence of the conviction of your own minds, but are proposed merely for the purpose of propping up your fallen fortunes, and conciliating the favor of a particular party, to whose support you look." On the conclusion of the debate it was found that the government was in a minority of thirty-six. About a fortnight later a motion of censure on the government, proposed by Sir Robert Peel, was carried by a majority of one, and a dissolution was immediately announced.

During the ensuing general election the League strained every nerve to insure the return to Parliament of candidates favorable to the cause of free-trade. Every elector received a packet of papers bearing on the Corn-laws, in which was enclosed a solemn address from the Council of the League, as follows: "You are an elector. To you is intrusted the privilege of choosing the law-makers. It is a trust for the good of others; and upon the right or wrong exercise of this trust depends the happiness or misery of millions of your fellow-creatures. At the next Parliamentary election you will be entitled to choose between a bread-taxer (one who withholds corn from the people), and a candidate who will untax the poor man's loaf. The choice involves an awful responsibility. Think, solemnly and carefully, before you decide. Examine the evidence which is now placed in your hands. Ignorance cannot be pleaded after knowledge has been freely given to you. Remember that you will decide for plenty or for scarcity, for comfort or misery, for health or disease, for life or death, to many thousands of immortal beings. Remember, above all, that your decision will be recorded on high, and that you will be called to account for your vote at that dread tribunal where all mankind will be judged—not by their professions, not by

their prayers, but when the blessed will be told, 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat.' " The system of sending pamphlets, prize essays on the Corn-laws, etc., to the electors was continued, after the election of 1841, to the end of the existence of the League, in order that, if a general election should occur, all the constituencies might be thoroughly imbued with free-trade doctrines. Among the papers circulated was a characteristic letter from Thomas Carlyle, who in 1832 wrote a kindly notice of the "Corn-law Rhymes" in the *Edinburgh Review*. In reply to a letter of invitation to the Anti-Corn-law banquet of 1843 he wrote: "As for the Corn-laws, my opinion, any time these ten years, has been complete; and even, so to speak, more than complete. For these ten years I have heard no argument, or shadow of an argument, in behalf of them, which was not of a kind (too literally) 'to make the angels weep.' I consider that if there is a pernicious, portentous, practical solecism, threatening huge ruin, under the sun at present, it is that of Corn-laws in such an England as ours of the year 1843. I consider that the Corn-laws lie on the threshold of all and every important improvement in our anomalous, distressed, and distressing condition of society; that they fatally block up all possibility of the innumerable improvements which are fast becoming indispensable, if England is to continue to exist; that it is the duty of English citizens to do whatsoever is practicable for the removal of these laws; that they will have to be removed, unless the universe, and its eternal laws, are a chimera; that God declares against them audibly to all just hearts; and that men are now fast declaring—that all men cannot too soon declare—how much lies beyond the Corn-laws desperately calling for revision, for reformation, among us; and till the Corn-laws are removed the problem cannot so much as begin."

The efforts of the League were partially successful. Though, as everybody expected, from the unpopularity which had surrounded Lord Melbourne's government for several years, the followers of Sir Robert Peel formed a large majority of the



new Parliament, several prominent free-traders were returned. Among them were Cobden (who was returned for Stockport, which he had unsuccessfully contested in 1837), Dr. Bowring, and Messrs. Mark Philips, Joseph Brotherton, and T. Milner Gibson. When Parliament met, on the 19th of August, the Queen's Speech, drawn up by the shattered Melbourne administration, was found to contain several passages with a more distinct avowal of free-trade principles than had yet been ventured on by any prominent political party. "It will be for you," it said, "to consider whether some of these duties" (import duties on foreign goods) "are not so trifling in amount as to be unproductive to the revenue, while they are vexatious to commerce. You may farther examine whether the principles of protection, upon which others of these duties are founded, be not carried to an extent injurious alike to the income of the state and the interests of the people. Her Majesty is desirous that you should consider the laws which regulate the trade in corn. It will be for you to determine whether these laws do not aggravate the natural fluctuations of supply, whether they do not embarrass trade, damage the currency, and by their operation diminish the comfort and increase the privations of the great body of the community." The amendment to the Address was proposed by Mr. Stuart Wortley, and, after a debate of four nights, was carried by a majority of ninety-one. A similar amendment was carried in the House of Lords by a majority of seventy-two. Of course the Whigs had no resource but to give place to their Conservative adversaries. Of the new ministry the head was Sir Robert Peel. Among his more prominent colleagues were the Duke of Wellington (who consented to take a seat in the Cabinet without holding any office), Sir James Graham, and Lord Stanley. The debate on the Address is memorable, as having been the occasion on which Cobden delivered his first speech. "It was remarked," says Harriet Martineau, in her "*History of the Peace*," "that he was not treated in the House with the courtesy usually accorded to a new member, and it was perceived that he did not need such



observance." Heedless of jeers and interruption, Cobden, with the calm self-possession which usually accompanies a man who is a perfect master of his subject, related in simple and forcible language the hardships which the Corn-laws inflicted on the working-classes of the country, and told the incredulous and sneering land-owners—who formed the main support of Sir Robert Peel's party—how intense and bitter was the feeling gradually spreading through the country against these laws and those who supported them. An eloquent speaker in the highest sense of the word Cobden never was, for he had not that lofty imagination without which no one can be a really great orator. But of the qualities that make one a popular speaker in Parliament there were few or none that he did not possess. Unassuming, concise, logical, never wearying his audience with platitudes, or obliging them to listen to "a thing of sound and fury signifying nothing," Cobden, in spite of the dislike then entertained to the cause he advocated, soon became a favorite with the House, and was listened to with a respect not usually accorded to a speaker who heads a small minority.

Having announced that it was not his intention to propose any measures of importance during the present session, Sir Robert Peel prorogued Parliament on the 8th of October. The outlook was then a dull and gloomy one. A bad harvest, universal stagnation of trade, and a financial crisis caused deep and wide-spread distress through the country, especially in the manufacturing districts, where the distress that prevailed—which was, of course, greatly increased by the Corn-laws—was almost unparalleled. Things had not changed for the better when, on February 3, 1842, Parliament again opened. A graphic and correct account of the state of affairs then is given in Lord Beaconsfield's last novel, "Endymion." "The condition of England," he says, "at the meeting of Parliament in 1842 was not satisfactory. The depression of trade in the manufacturing districts seemed overwhelming, and continued increasing during the whole of the year. A memorial from Stockport to the Queen in the spring represented that more

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than half of the master-spinners had failed, and that no less than three thousand dwelling-houses were untenanted. One-fifth of the population of Leeds were dependent on the poor-rates. The state of Sheffield was not less severe; and the blast-furnaces of Wolverhampton were extinguished. There were almost daily meetings at Liverpool, Manchester, and Leeds, to consider the great and increasing distress of the country, and to induce ministers to bring forward remedial measures; but as these were impossible, violence was soon substituted for passionate appeals to the fears or the humanity of the government. Vast bodies of the population assembled in Stalybridge, and Ashton, and Oldham, and marched into Manchester. For a week the rioting was unchecked, but the government despatched a strong military force to that city, and order was restored.

"The state of affairs in Scotland was not more favorable. There were food riots in several of the Scotch towns, and in Glasgow the multitude assembled, and then commenced what they called a begging tour, but which was really a progress of undisguised intimidation. The economic crisis in Ireland was yet to come, but the whole of that country was absorbed in a harassing and dangerous agitation for the repeal of the Union between the two countries."

During the time when Parliament was prorogued the leaders of the League had been very active. Public meetings were held in all parts of the country, and the publications of the League were circulated in immense quantities. Two important conferences—the one, of seven hundred ministers of religion; the other, of one hundred and twenty delegates of the League—were held in Manchester, at both of which valuable information was elicited. Moreover, to quote Mr. Mongredien's excellent little book on the "Free-trade Movement in England," "The ladies of Lancashire took their part in the work, and occasionally held monster tea-meetings, at which they were addressed by some of the leaders of the movement, and most frequently by George Thompson, whose peculiarly impassioned language and thrilling accents secured him great favor from

female audiences." These "monster tea-meetings" culminated in a bazaar, which was held in the Theatre Royal, Manchester, under the auspices of an active ladies' committee, of which Mrs. Cobden was president. It lasted ten days, and was a great success, resulting in a net balance of some £9000, which was handed over to the funds of the League.

When Parliament was opened, in 1842, a conference of seven hundred Anti-Corn-law delegates was held in London, to watch over any action that might be taken as to the Corn-laws. On the evening of the 9th of February (the day on which, as he had given notice, he was to move that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to take into consideration the laws which affect the importation of corn), Sir Robert Peel drove down to the House. He was saluted by cries from a number of the delegates who had been excluded from the House of Commons of "No Corn-law," "Down with monopoly," "Give bread and labor," "No sliding-scale," etc. When, however, his intentions were announced, it was found that a "sliding-scale" was still to be maintained. "When corn," said he, "is at 59s. per quarter and under 60s., the duty at present is 27s. 8d.; when it is between these prices, the duty I propose is 13s. When the price of corn is at 50s., the existing duty is 36s. 8d., increasing as the price falls; instead of which I propose that when corn is at 50s. the duty shall only be 20s., and that that duty shall in no case be exceeded. At 56s. the existing duty is 30s. 8d.; the duty I propose at that price is 16s. At 60s. the existing duty is 26s. 8d.; the duty I propose at that price is 12s. At 63s. the existing duty is 23s. 8d.; the duty I propose is 9s. At 64s. the existing duty is 22s. 8d.; the duty I propose is 8s. At 70s. the existing duty is 10s. 8d.; the duty I propose is 5s. Therefore it is impossible to deny, on comparing the duty I propose with that which at present exists, that it will cause a very considerable decrease of the protection which the present duty affords to the home-grower."

Against Sir Robert Peel's proposal two motions were made. On February 14, Lord John Russell moved that the House,

“considering the evils which have been caused by the present Corn-laws, and especially by the fluctuation of the graduated or ‘sliding-scale,’ is not prepared to adopt the measure of her Majesty’s government, which is founded on the same principles, and is likely to be attended by the same results.” This motion was supported by a vigorous speech from Lord Palmerston, who seized the opportunity of distinctly advocating freedom of trade. After four nights’ debate, Lord John Russell’s motion was rejected by a majority of 123.

A more thorough-going motion was proposed by Mr. Villiers a few days after Lord John Russell’s. He moved that the duties on corn should be entirely abolished. An interesting debate ensued, which lasted five nights. Among the most important speeches made on this occasion were those of Macaulay and of Cobden. Macaulay, in his usual incisive way, denounced Sir Robert Peel’s proposed measure as “a measure which unsettles everything and settles nothing; a measure which pleases nobody; a measure which nobody asks for, and which nobody thanks him for; a measure which will neither extend trade nor relieve distress.” “What an avocation for a legislature,” said Cobden, “to fix a price on corn! It may be very amusing to find that there are a few gentlemen still at large who advocate the principle of Parliamentary interposition to fix the price at which articles are to be sold; but when we find a Prime-minister coming down to Parliament to avow such principles, it really becomes anything but amusing.” At the conclusion of the debate Mr. Villiers’s amendment was rejected by the sweeping majority of 303. When the measure came before the House of Lords only five peers were found to support a motion of Lord Brougham for the total repeal of duties on corn. On April 29 the new “sliding-scale” became law.

Meanwhile, on March 11, the Prime-minister introduced his Budget, which contained not a few features calculated to conciliate the free-traders. By imposing an income-tax of sevenpence in the pound, by fresh stamp and spirit duties, and by an export duty of four shillings a ton on coals, he anticipated



that he would be able to raise a surplus revenue of £1,740,000, of which he proposed to apply £1,200,000 to the reduction of the tariff. Out of 1200 articles paying duty he recommended an abatement of duty on 750, leaving 450 untouched. "I am aware," he said, in the singularly able speech with which he introduced these measures, "that many gentlemen who are strong advocates for free-trade may consider that I have not gone far enough. I believe that on the general principle of free-trade there is now no great difference of opinion, and that all agree in the general rule, that we should purchase in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest." The various proposals of Sir Robert Peel, though strongly opposed by some, were carried by large majorities. Thus the session of 1842 marks a distinct advance in the cause for which the Anti-Corn-law League labored.

While Parliament was sitting, and after its prorogation on August 12, the state of the country was calculated to excite both pity and alarm. Bread was dear, work was scarce, and wages were low. In the great manufacturing districts the distress of the operatives reached a pitch which happily has never been known since the repeal of the Corn-laws. Blind with indignation at a state of things of which they were hardly aware of the cause, and which they knew not how to remedy, the populace fell easy victims to the mingled folly and wickedness of the Chartist agitators. These men urged them to pay no heed to the "humbug clap-trap of the League," but to insist upon getting the "Six Points" of the Charter made the law of the land. If they did so, the repeal of the Corn-laws and every other desirable reform would immediately follow.\* To raise the price of labor and to compel the legislature to grant the Charter, a month's universal strike was advocated. In the

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\* The "Six Points of the Charter," it is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to mention, were—universal suffrage, vote by ballot, annual Parliaments, equal electoral districts, abolition of the property qualification for members of Parliament, and the payment of members of Parliament.



second week of August many of the factory hands in Lancashire stopped work, and, forming themselves into bands, wandered about from place to place, obliging the workers in other districts to follow their example. Of course this foolish conduct only intensified the prevailing distress. The masters in the districts most affected by the strike quietly adopted and published a resolution, "That the mills and other public works of Manchester and Salford be not opened for work until the work-people therein employed signify their desire to resume work." This the operatives were soon obliged to do. A masterly and dignified address by Mr. Bright to the working-men of Rochdale did much to allay the excitement of the moment, and to mitigate the bad feeling which the strife had engendered between masters and workmen. "As intelligent men," he said, "you know you cannot remain out; you cannot permanently raise wages by force; you cannot get the Charter now. What are you to do, then? Return to your employment. It is more noble to confess your error than to persist in it. . . . If every employer and workman in the kingdom were to swear on their bended knees that wages should not fall, they would still assuredly fall, if the Corn-law continues. No power on earth can maintain your wages at the present rate, if the Corn-law be not repealed. You may doubt this now; but consider the past, I beseech you—what the past tells you the future will confirm. You may not thank me for thus addressing you; but, nevertheless, I am your friend. Your own class does not include a man more sincerely anxious than I am to obtain for you both industrial and political freedom. You have found me, on all occasions, if a feeble, yet an honest and zealous defender; and I trust in this matter time will work no change in me. My heart sympathizes deeply in your sufferings. I believe I know whence they mainly spring, and I would gladly relieve them. I would willingly become poor, if that would make you comfortable and happy."

During this eventful time the League prosecuted its operations with great vigor. Up to about the middle of Oc-

tober, 1842, 2000 lectures had been delivered, and more than 5,000,000 of the Anti-Corn-law tracts had been circulated. Against such energetic action as this, which involved the expenditure of some £100,000, the "Agricultural Protection Society" (a body which was instituted in 1842 for the purpose of upholding the Corn-laws, and of which the leading managers were the Dukes of Buckingham and Richmond) could make only a very feeble and ineffective stand. Moreover, petitions with millions of signatures were presented to the legislature praying for the abolition of the Corn-laws; a memorial, signed by over a quarter of a million of the women in Manchester and its neighborhood, was presented to the Queen; and £50,000 to carry on the operations of the League for another six months was raised with a facility and rapidity which surprised its opponents, but which did not astonish its friends.

A sad occurrence darkened the opening weeks of 1843. On January 21, Mr. Drummond, the private secretary of Sir Robert Peel, was fired at in the street and mortally wounded by a man named McNaughten. The murderer, who appears to have been insane, was supposed to have mistaken Mr. Drummond for Sir Robert Peel; and hence the crime attracted more attention than it might otherwise have done. It shows to what a height party feeling had grown at this time, to find that some were actually wicked and cowardly enough to lay the outrage to the charge of the Anti-Corn-law League.

Parliament opened on February 2. A good harvest had by this time rendered the supply of food more plentiful; but trade was still very dull, and the state of the country by no means inspiring. In the debate on the Address, Sir Robert Peel made the emphatic declaration, that "her Majesty's Government have not in contemplation any amendment of the Corn-laws." This roused the free-traders to action; and, on February 13, Lord Howick moved for a committee of the whole House to consider the causes of the prevailing distress. On the fifth night of the debate which followed this motion Cobden delivered an able speech, in which he vigorously advo-

cated the repeal of the Corn-Laws, as the true cure for the evils under which the country was laboring. At the close of his speech he said: "Sir Robert Peel had it in his power to carry the measures necessary for the people; and if he had not that power as a minister, he would have it by resigning his office. Sir Robert Peel should be held individually responsible." This led to a scene which created great excitement at the time. Sir Robert Peel rose and, with great vehemence, said, "Sir, the honorable gentleman has stated here very emphatically, what he has more than once stated at the conferences of the Anti-Corn-law League, that he holds me individually responsible for the distress and suffering of the country; that he holds me personally responsible. Be the consequences of these insinuations what they may, never will I be influenced by menaces to adopt a course which I consider—" The remainder of the sentence was lost in the vehement cheers which came from the ministerial benches. Cobden then rose, and said: "I did not say that I held the right honorable gentleman personally responsible. (Shouts of 'Yes, yes; you did, you did.') I have said that I held the right honorable gentleman responsible by virtue of his office, as the whole context of what I said was sufficient to explain." This explanation was coldly and ungraciously accepted by Sir Robert Peel. The motion for a committee was lost by 306 votes against 191.

"It was believed—believed by men of education—by men in Parliament—by men in attendance on the government—that the Anti-Corn-law League sanctioned assassination, and did not object to carry its aims by means of it." This remark of Miss Martineau is curiously illustrated by what the *Times* said on the dispute between Cobden and Sir Robert Peel: "We do not impute to Mr. Cobden an intent to murder; but we do impute to him that, with his eyes open, knowing fully the threatening consequences to Sir Robert Peel's life of popular odium, and with no other purpose than to increase his own credit and power with the most violent class of politicians,

he feels no scruple at recklessly and unceasingly laboring to direct that odium, personally and individually, on the minister whose life has been once already attempted. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that, though he has no intention to use the pistol himself, he does not find himself at liberty to affront those who do. If he is not anxious to put the Premier out of the world, he cannot, by the extreme of charity, be fancied very careful to keep him in it."

The charge thus made was repeated by many protectionist orators, whose zeal was considerably in excess of their discretion. The League lost no time in disavowing, in the most public manner, such disgraceful imputations. A meeting, at which nine thousand persons were present, was held in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester, under the presidency of Mr. George Wilson, the Chairman of the League, to vindicate the character of Cobden and his associates. An address to Cobden was unanimously voted, declaring that, "fortified by the approbation of your own conscience, and by that of a vast portion of your fellow-countrymen, who have watched your career with intense and increasing interest, you can well afford to despise the assaults and calumnies with which the abettors of monopoly seek to turn you from the prosecution of the great work to which you have so nobly devoted yourself." Numerous similar meetings were held in many parts of the country.

In March, 1843, the League having failed to find any room in London large enough to hold the enthusiastic crowds who flocked to hear such speakers as Messrs. Cobden and Bright, endeavored to engage Exeter Hall in which to hold their meetings. In this they were unsuccessful. However, they managed to engage Drury Lane Theatre. The first meeting of the League there was held on Wednesday, March 15, and was a great success, the whole building—pit, boxes, and gallery—being crowded. Speeches were delivered by George Wilson, the Chairman of the League, and by Messrs. Cobden and Bright, all of whom succeeded in eliciting the hearty sym-

pathy and applause of the vast audience. After this meetings of the League were held in Drury Lane Theatre, at intervals of about a week, till May 3, when Mr. Macready, the lessee, was forbidden by the shareholders' committee to let the theatre for political purposes. At this time Mr. Macready was performing Milton's "Comus" at Drury Lane. The following passage from the lips of Miss Helen Faucit was always received with applause, on account of its appropriateness, by the members of the League, many of whom were great admirers of Mr. Macready:

"If every just man, that now pines with want,  
Had but a moderate and beseeching share  
Of that which lewdly pamper'd Luxury  
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,  
Nature's full blessings would be well dispens'd  
In unsuperfluous, even proportion,  
And she no whit encumber'd with her store;  
And then the giver would be better thank'd,  
His praise due paid."

On May 13 Mr. Villiers brought forward his annual motion: "That the House should resolve itself into a committee for the purpose of considering the duties affecting the importation of foreign corn, with the view to their immediate abolition." The debate which followed this motion was a long one, extending over five nights; but the subject had been so often ventilated in former Parliaments that the speeches contained few features of interest. Sir Robert Peel's partial adoption of free-trade in the previous years had been anything but satisfactory to the more bigoted of the protectionist party, one of whom on this occasion seized the opportunity of stating that "the agriculturists looked to the future in a state of the utmost despair, and conceived that there was so much doubt as to the line of conduct which her Majesty's ministers would pursue hereafter, that they would rather at once see the end come than wait in suspense and die by inches." Cobden, it need scarcely be said, spoke ably in favor of Mr. Villiers's



motion, which was, as in former years, rejected by a large majority—381 to 125. Lord John Russell had given the cue to the Whig party how to vote, by saying that he would vote against the motion, because it pledged him to the total abolition of all duties on corn, whereas he was in favor of a moderate fixed duty.

In this debate, as usual, the opponents of the Corn-law had the best of it in argument and in eloquence. Even the most ardent protectionist newspapers could not be blind to the fact, that many of their friends offered only a half-hearted resistance to the arguments of the Anti-Corn-law party. Speaking of the debate, the *Morning Post* said: "Melancholy was the exhibition in the House of Commons on Monday. Mr. Cobden was the hero of the night. Toward the close of the debate he rose in his place and hurled at the heads of the Parliamentary land-owners of England those calumnies and taunts which constitute the staple of his addresses to farmers. The taunts were not retorted; the calumnies were not repelled. No; the representatives of the industrial interests of the British empire quailed before the founder and leader of the Anti-Corn-law League. They winced under his sarcasms. They listened in speechless terror to his denunciations. No man among them dared to grapple with the archenemy of English industry. . . . Melancholy was it to witness, on Monday, the land-owners of England, the representatives by blood of the Norman chivalry, the representatives by election of the industrial interests of the empire, shrinking under the blows aimed at them by a Manchester money-grubber."

The Parliamentary session of 1843 was signalized by the entry into the House of Commons of one who was soon to be ranked among its leading members. In April, 1843, John Bright, yielding to the solicitation of the free-traders of Durham, contested that city in opposition to Lord Dungannon. He was defeated by a majority of 101. In the same year, however, Lord Dungannon was unseated for bribery, and Mr. Bright again came forward, his opponent this time being Mr.

Purvis, Q.C. Mr. Bright was on this occasion the successful candidate, being, on July 25, returned by a majority of seventy-eight. The opposition to his election was very violent. One Newcastle paper, during his second electioneering campaign, advised its readers as follows: "It is stated that Mr. Bright, the Anti-Corn-law agitator, is expected to visit the wool-fair, which will be held at Alnwick shortly, in order to scatter the seeds of disaffection in that quarter. Should he make his appearance, which is not improbable, it is to be hoped that there may be found some stalwart yeoman to treat the disaffected vagabond as he deserves."

Next to Cobden, to John Bright is mainly due the success of the Anti-Corn-law League. Born on November 16, 1811, the son of a cotton-spinner in Rochdale, who, from a humble position, had risen to wealth by his integrity of character and determination of purpose, John Bright early became acquainted with the grievances of the working-classes, and knew how heavy and vexatious was the burden which the Corn-laws imposed on them. His wonderful oratorical gifts were first shown in 1830, when he appeared as a speaker on behalf of the temperance cause. He then began to take a warm interest in the advancement of popular education, which in 1837 or 1838 brought him into connection with Cobden, who was at that time actively engaged in the same work. No two better qualified to be colleagues in carrying on the Anti-Corn-law agitation could have been found than Bright and Cobden. The qualities the one possessed in abundance were just the qualities the other was somewhat deficient in. Admirably concise and luminous as Cobden's speeches were, they wanted that impassioned fervor, that rich glow of imagination, which light up every speech of John Bright. With his fine command of noble and manly diction, and his extraordinary powers of invective and sarcasm (not always, say his opponents, kept within due bounds), John Bright soon became one of the most prominent members of the Anti-Corn-law League. The charitable expectations of his opponents, that, like so many

who have distinguished themselves as excellent platform speakers, he would prove a failure in the House of Commons, were thoroughly disappointed. The eloquence which had affected thousands at crowded meetings was found sufficient to oblige even protectionist land-owners to listen with respect to the Quaker cotton-spinner.

On the prorogation of Parliament in August, 1843, the League commenced their preparations for the coming campaign. On September 28, 1843, the accounts for the previous year were read. The receipts were £50,290 14s.; the expenditure, £47,814 3s. 9d. During the year 9,026,000 tracts and stamped publications had been circulated; 651 lectures had been delivered; and deputations had been sent to 156 public meetings in counties and boroughs. It was now resolved to raise a fund of £100,000; to publish a large weekly paper, under the title of *The League*; and to engage Covent Garden Theatre for fifty nights, at a cost of sixty pounds a night.

The first of the Covent Garden meetings was held on September 28. Speeches were delivered by George Wilson, by Richard Cobden, by John Bright, by W. J. Fox, and by Daniel O'Connell. Of all these speakers none was more forcible or better adapted to the audience than Mr. Fox, a Unitarian minister, afterward M.P. for Oldham. Possessed of few personal attractions, but gifted with a fine voice and a rich command of language, he had the art of riveting the attention of his audience and obliging them to listen to him. His speeches, when read, scarcely come up to the high eulogiums passed on them by those who heard them; nevertheless, they contain passages which partly let us into the secret of Fox's power. For example, few will not be able to imagine how effective, if well delivered, would be the following passage, describing the misery entailed by the Corn-laws on the inhabitants of great towns: "Did one want to exhibit it in this great theatre, it might be done, not by calling together such an audience as I now see here, but by going into the by-places, the alleys, the dark

courts, the garrets and cellars of this metropolis, and by bringing out thence their wretched and famished inmates. Oh! we might crowd them here—boxes, pit, and galleries—and with their shrunk and shrivelled forms, with their wan and pallid cheeks, with their distressful looks—perhaps with dark and bitter passions depicted in their countenances—we might thus exhibit a scene that would appall the stoutest heart and melt the hardest—a scene that we would wish the Prime-minister of this country to see, when we would say to him, ‘There, delegate of Majesty, leader of legislators, conservator of institutions, look upon that mass of misery! That is what your laws and your power, if they did not create, have failed to cure or even to mitigate.’ And, supposing this is to be done, supposing this scene to be realized, we know what would be said. We should be told that there has always been poverty in the world; that there are numerous ills which laws can neither make nor cure; that whatever is done, much distress will still exist. They will say, ‘It is the mysterious dispensation of Providence, and there we must leave it.’ ‘Hypocrites! hypocrites!’ I would say to them, ‘urge not that plea yet; you have no right to it. Strike off every fetter upon industry; take the last grain of poison of monopoly out of the cup of poverty; give labor its full rights; throw open the markets of the world to an industrious people; and then, if after all there be poverty, you will have earned your right to qualify for the unenviable dignity of a blasphemer of Providence. But until then, whatever restriction exists, while any impediment is raised to the well-being of the many for the sordid profit of the few—till then you cannot, you dare not, look this gaunt spectre in the face and exclaim, “Thou canst not say I did it!”’”

The crowded meetings in Covent Garden Theatre, and the rapidity with which money passed into the coffers of the League, began to convince those who had hitherto sneered most at it that it was becoming a power in the state. “The League,” said the *Times* of November 18, 1843, “is a great



fact. It would be foolish, nay, rash, to deny its importance. . . . It is a great fact that at one meeting at Manchester more than forty manufacturers should subscribe, on the spot, each at least £100—some £300, some £400, some £500—for the advancement of a measure which, right or wrong, just or unjust, expedient or injurious, they at least believe it to be their duty, or their interest, or both, to advance in every possible way. These are facts important and worthy of consideration. No moralist can disregard them; no politician can sneer at them; no statesman can undervalue them. He who collects opinions must chronicle them. He who frames laws must to some extent consult them. . . . A new power has arisen in the state, and maids and matrons flock to theatres as though it were but ‘a new translation from the French.’ Let no man say that we are blind to the possible mischiefs of such a state of things. We acknowledge that we dislike gregarious collections of cant and cotton-men. We cannot but know that, whatever be the end of this agitation, it will expire only to bequeath its violence and its turbulence to some successor.”

The year 1844 opened auspiciously for the League. On January 1 the Marquis of Westminster sent a donation of £500 to its funds, and in a letter to Mr. George Wilson, the Chairman of the League, expressed a hope that they would obtain from the government, whoever might be at the head of affairs, the fullest measure of free-trade compatible with the national credit. The Parliamentary session of 1844, so far as the Corn-laws were concerned, was one of the quietest there had been since the League came into being. On March 14 Cobden, in order to secure a test division, moved for a select committee to inquire into the effect of import duties on tenant-farmers and farm-laborers. This motion was defeated by a majority of ninety-one. In June Mr. Villiers’s annual motion for the repeal of the Corn-laws was rejected by a majority of 328 to 124. Repeal seemed, so far as regarded the House of Commons, as far distant as ever.

It was not so out-of-doors. There the efforts made by the



League to "educate the people" had not proved in vain. Through all classes of the community the idea was spreading fast that the Corn-laws could not much longer be tolerated. Trade had to some extent revived; an abundant harvest had reduced the price of corn and made bread cheaper. The class suffering most from the Corn-laws at this time was the very class which these laws were enacted to protect—the farmers and their laborers. Their rents had been fixed on the basis of high prices; when corn was cheap, they suffered; when it was dear, they prospered in the midst of general misery. Many of them were beginning to see, what had so often been pressed on their attention by Cobden and Bright and other speakers, that the Corn-laws were no benefit to them at all, and that they would thrive quite as well without their protection.

At the close of the year 1844 it was found that of the proposed £100,000 fund—begun in September, 1843—£86,000 had been raised. During the year one hundred and fifty public meetings had been held in Parliamentary boroughs, besides various large gatherings in Covent Garden Theatre and in the Manchester Free-trade Hall; and six hundred lectures had been delivered in various parts of England and Wales by the agents of the League. More than 2,000,000 of stamped and other publications were distributed, while of *The League* newspaper about 20,000 copies were circulated each week. The number of letters received was 25,000; the number despatched was 300,000. During this and the succeeding year the Council of the League lost no opportunity of urging on their friends who were not electors the duty of purchasing freehold qualifications in the counties. Their efforts in this direction were very successful. Mr. Ashworth states that it was believed that within a few months a sufficient number of persons had purchased freehold qualifications in North Cheshire, in South Lancashire, and in the West Riding of Yorkshire, to secure to those constituencies free-trade majorities in the event of an election.

During the session of 1844 Sir Robert Peel's administration had made some progress in free-trade by reducing the duties

on foreign sugar not produced by slave labor, and the duties on wool, coffee, currants, and one or two other articles. A much greater step in advance was made in 1845. In bringing forward his Budget on February 14, Sir Robert Peel proposed to continue the income-tax for three years longer. By this means he expected to have at his disposal a surplus of £3,409,000. This he announced his intention of devoting to the complete abolition of the duties on glass, cotton, wool, and foreign timber; to the reduction of the sugar duties; and to the repeal of the import duties on 430 out of 813 articles then liable to such duties. These important financial reforms passed with little difficulty, the only serious opposition to them being a motion by Mr. Gibson, that "no arrangement of the sugar duties could be satisfactory which did not involve an equalization of the duty on foreign and colonial sugars," which was negatived by a large majority. But the protectionist members of Parliament began to regard Sir Robert Peel and his pronounced free-trade proclivities with doubt and distrust.

On March 13 Cobden moved for a select committee to inquire into the cause and extent of the agricultural depression. He was defeated by a majority of ninety-two; but Mr. Sidney Herbert, who opposed his motion, did so in a speech which was thought to bode no good to the protectionists. "It was distasteful to him," he said, "as a member of the agricultural body, to be always coming to Parliament whining for protection." On March 17 Mr. P. Miles, on behalf of the "agricultural interest," moved that a portion of the surplus revenue should be devoted to the relief of distressed agriculturists. Only seventy-eight members supported his motion; but the debate on it is notable, as being the occasion on which Mr. Disraeli delivered one of the first of those furious invectives against Sir Robert Peel, by which he raised himself not a few steps in the ladder that leads to political eminence. "The right honorable baronet," he said, "had once avowed that he was prouder of being the leader of the country gentlemen of England than of being intrusted with the confidence of sover-

eigns. But where are the country gentlemen of England now? They are discovering the difference between the hours of courtship and the moments of possession; little is now said about them. When the beloved object has ceased to charm, it is useless to appeal to the feelings. Instead of listening to their complaints, the Premier sends down his valet, a well-behaved person, to make it known that we are to have no 'whining' here." [Alluding to Mr. Sidney Herbert's remark.] . . . "Protection appears to be about in the same condition that Protestantism was in 1828. The country will draw its moral. For my part, if we are to have free-trade, I, who honor genius, prefer that such measures should be proposed by the honorable member for Stockport [Cobden] than by one who, though skilled in Parliamentary manœuvres, has tampered with the generous confidence of a great people and of a great party. For myself, I care not what will be the result. Dissolve, if you like, the Parliament you have betrayed, and appeal to the people who, I believe, mistrust you. For me there remains this at least—the opportunity of expressing thus publicly my belief that the Conservative government is an organized hypocrisy."

On May 8 a great national bazaar, to forward the cause of the League, was opened in Covent Garden Theatre. One of its objects was, of course, to raise money, but it was hoped that it might serve other and not less important ends. "If money only were our object," said Mr. George Wilson, a short time before its opening, "a greater amount might easily be procured by a general subscription than we are likely to receive from this exhibition; but we want a more generally implied co-operation than the mere amount of money would imply. We want to see assembled in this theatre our friends from all parts of the kingdom, in order that they may confer together; that they may become known to each other; that they may derive from such meetings, and from what they will see here, a new impetus, and carry to the extremities of the country a redoubled resolution to assist us in promoting the great object which

we have in view." These anticipations were amply realized. The bazaar was an eminent success in every way. It was open for three weeks, and within that time 125,000 persons paid for admission. "Four hundred ladies," says Miss Martineau, "conducted the sales; and, generally speaking, each contributing town had a stall, with its name, and sometimes its civic arms, painted above it. The porcelain and cutlery exhibitions, the mirrors and grindstones, the dolls and wheat-sacks, shoes and statuettes, the relics of antiquity and the last fashion of colored muslins, flannels and plated goods, anatomical preparations, laces and boots, made a curious and wonderful display, which was thought to produce more effect on some Parliamentary minds than all the eloquence yet uttered in the House of Commons." The total proceeds of the bazaar amounted to over £25,000, which, added to the money otherwise collected, brought up the League's receipts for the year to £116,000.

On May 26 Lord John Russell, in the House of Commons, moved eight resolutions relating to the condition of the working-classes. One of these was: "That the present Corn-law tends to check improvements in agriculture, produces uncertainty in all farming speculations, and holds out to the owners and occupiers of land prospects of special advantage which it fails to secure." His speech on the resolutions amounted to a complete declaration of free-trade principles. Instead of wishing, as formerly, to impose a moderate fixed duty, the whole tone of his speech showed that, with very little pressure, he would be willing to agree to a measure for total repeal. He was now convinced that the policy of restriction was mischievous, that it favored one class at the expense of another, and that it was especially injurious to the laboring-classes. "Now," said he, "is the time to enfranchise trade and industry—now, with political tranquillity and leisure, with bread at free-trade prices, with revived commerce and prosperous manufactures—now, with population growing at an almost fearful rate of increase—now, before another bad harvest brings on the cry of hunger." This and many other parts of Lord John Russell's



speech showed that the party which he headed was gradually approaching closer in opinion to the Anti-Corn-law League. His resolution was negatived by a majority of seventy-eight. When, about a fortnight later, Mr. Villiers brought forward his annual motion on the Corn-laws, it was negatived by 254 votes against 122.

In the summer of 1845 there appeared every prospect of an abundant harvest, which would increase the prosperity that now, after a long period of dull trade, was beginning to prevail. But heavy rains began to fall, and before the prorogation of Parliament in August ominous rumors of the state of the crops went forth. These rumors soon proved only too well-founded. By the end of September it was evident that the wheat crop would be far below an average in quality as well as in quantity. To this misfortune was added one enormously greater. The potato crop throughout the length and breadth of Ireland turned out a complete failure. Starvation was staring the denizens of that poverty-stricken isle in the face.

It is to this potato famine that we must attribute the repeal of the Corn-laws of 1846. No doubt, even though it had not occurred, they would have been repealed in the course of a few years. In June, 1845, at a meeting in Covent Garden Theatre, Mr. Bright said: "Sir Robert Peel knows well enough what is wanted; and were his government ten times as strong as it is, it must yield before the imperious and irresistible necessity which is every day gaining ground upon it. From his recent speeches I would argue that he intends to repeal the Corn-law. He cannot say what he now says, and yet mean ever to go back to the old and foolish policy of protection. He sprung from commerce, and until he has proved it himself I will never believe that there is any man—much less will I believe that he is the man—who would go down to the grave having had the power to deliver that commerce, and yet not having had the manliness, honesty, and courage to do it." But though a free-trader in theory, it might have been several years before Sir Robert Peel saw fit to convert his theory into practice, had not



the fearful misery caused by the failure of the potato crop rendered it imperatively necessary that something should be done. On October 13 he wrote an important letter to Sir James Graham, in which, after mentioning the failure of the potato crop, he said: "I foresee the necessity that may be imposed upon us at an early period of considering whether there is not that well-grounded apprehension of actual scarcity that justifies and compels the adoption of every means of relief which the exercise of the prerogative, or legislation, might afford. I have no confidence in such remedies as the prohibition of exports or the stoppage of distilleries. *The removal of impediments to import is the only effectual remedy.*"

It was fast becoming plain to all that this was the plan that would have to be adopted. Impediments to import could not long continue to exist while a whole nation was starving for the want of that bread which their removal would enable it to procure. On October 28 a great meeting, at which eight thousand persons were present, was held in the Manchester Free-trade Hall. Among the speakers were George Wilson, Richard Cobden, and John Bright. An extract from the latter's speech may be quoted, as giving expression to the popular feeling of the hour. "At this moment," he said, "all around us is strengthening the conviction of former years, and is telling us, in a voice louder than ever, that all the words of reproach, all the harsh sayings which we have uttered against the Corn-law, have failed to express its true character as it is now exhibited before us. . . . Peel's pet law is now working precisely as its supporters wished it to work. It is to prevent the trade in foreign corn—to make you and your fellow-men—the twenty-seven millions—work and work, and scramble and scramble, and starve, it may be, in order that out of the produce of your industry—out of the scarcity of wages of the many—something may be taken by law, and handed over to the rich and the great, by whom and for whom the law was made."

On November 22 Lord John Russell gave his opinion definitely in favor of the total repeal of the Corn-laws. In a letter

to his constituents he stated that it was no longer worth while to contend for a fixed duty. "In 1841 the free-trade party would have agreed to a duty of eight shillings per quarter on wheat, and after a lapse of years this duty might have been farther reduced, and ultimately abolished. But the imposition of any duty at present, without a provision for its extinction within a short period, would but prolong a contest already sufficiently fruitful of animosity and discontent. . . . The government appear to be waiting for some excuse to give up the present Corn-laws. Let the people, by petition, by address, by remonstrance, afford them the excuse they seek. Let the ministry prepare such a revision of the taxes as in their opinion may render the public burdens more just and more equal; let them add any other provision which courteous and even scrupulous forbearance may suggest; but let the removal of restrictions on the admission of the main articles of food and clothing used by the mass of the people be required in plain terms, as useful to all great interests and indispensable to the progress of the nation."

Meanwhile, Sir Robert Peel was not inactive. On October 31 he proposed in the Cabinet to issue an Order in Council, reducing the duty on grain in bond to one shilling a quarter, and to open the ports to the temporary admission of all grain at a small rate of duty. Only three of his colleagues agreed with him in this scheme, so it had to be abandoned. For several weeks Sir Robert Peel found himself tried to the utmost in the endeavor to frame some plan regarding the Corn-laws which would be agreed to by the Cabinet, and at the same time be acceptable to the country. On the 4th of December the whole nation was startled by an announcement in the *Times*: "The decision of the Cabinet is no longer a secret. Parliament, it is confidently reported, is to be summoned for the first week in January, and the Royal Speech will recommend an immediate consideration of the Corn-laws." Next day this announcement was contradicted by the *Standard* as an "atrocious fabrication;" but, though not exactly correct, it had some

foundation. A majority of the Cabinet was in favor of ultimate repeal, but Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleuch positively refused to consent to it. On December 5 Sir Robert Peel resigned office, and Lord John Russell was sent for to form a government.

To hold the reins of power at such a trying time as this was no easy task; and perhaps Lord John Russell was not sorry that he failed to form an administration. Earl Grey, fearing the warlike tendencies of Lord Palmerston, refused to join a government in which he was to hold the position of Foreign Secretary. Hopeless of reconciling these two powerful opponents, Lord John Russell gave up his task in despair, and Sir Robert Peel was recalled to power. The places of two of the protectionist irreconcilables—Lord Stanley, who remained firm in his convictions, and Lord Wharncliffe, who had died during Sir Robert Peel's temporary vacation of power—were filled up by Mr. Gladstone and Lord Dalhousie. The Duke of Buccleuch, "feeling it his imperative duty to his sovereign and his country to make every personal sacrifice," resumed his post of Lord Privy Seal. The rest of Peel's colleagues rallied round their old leader.

On December 23 a meeting of the Anti-Corn-law League was held in the Manchester Town-hall. A resolution, proposed by Mr. Ashworth, "That this meeting hereby expresses its high sense of the services which the National Anti-Corn-law League has rendered to the cause of free-trade; and that, in order to enable the Council to make renewed and increased exertions for the repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws, a subscription in aid of the great fund of £250,000 be now commenced," was passed; and ere the meeting broke up £60,000 was subscribed. A few days later this had increased to £150,000. So that, with regard to money at least, the League was well prepared for any turn affairs might take in the coming Parliament.

The session of 1846 opened on January 22. It was everywhere known that the Corn-laws were to be dealt with, and much interest was felt as to what course Sir Robert Peel would

adopt regarding them. In a speech he made in the debate on the Address he struck the key-note of his policy. He declared that he would not withhold the homage due to the progress of reason and to truth by denying that his opinions on the subject of protection had undergone a change. "Whether holding a private station or a public one, I will assert the privilege of yielding to the force of argument and conviction, and acting upon the results of large experience. It may be supposed that there is something humiliating in making such admissions. Sir, I feel no such humiliation; I should feel humiliation if, having modified or changed my opinions, I declined to acknowledge the change, for fear of incurring the imputation of inconsistency."

On January 27, in presence of a crowded House, Sir Robert Peel unfolded his plan of commercial policy. He proposed to fix the minimum duty at four shillings when wheat was at fifty-three shillings, rising to a maximum of ten shillings when the price was below forty-eight shillings. Other grain was to be charged less in proportion; and all grain from the colonies was to be admitted duty-free. On February 1, 1849, the duty on wheat, oats, barley, and rye was to cease to exist, with the exception of a nominal duty of one shilling per quarter. The scale of duties on imported wheat for the next three years was to be as follows:

When the average price of wheat was under 48s. the duty was 10s.				
"	"	"	"	48s. and under 49s. " 9s.
"	"	"	"	49s. and under 50s. " 8s.
"	"	"	"	50s. and under 51s. " 7s.
"	"	"	"	51s. and under 52s. " 6s.
"	"	"	"	52s. and under 53s. " 5s.
"	"	"	"	53s. and upward " 4s.

In a very eloquent and powerful speech Peel implored the land-owners not to obstruct the passing of this measure. "From a sincere conviction," he said, "that the settlement is not to be delayed; that, accompanied with the precautionary measures to which I have referred, it will not inflict injury on the agricult-



ural interest—from these feelings I should deeply lament, exclusively on public grounds, the failure of an attempt which, at the instance of her Majesty's government, I have made on this occasion, to recommend to your calm and dispassionate consideration these proposals, with no other feeling or interest in the ultimate issue than that they may, to use the words of her Majesty's Speech, conduce to the promotion 'of friendly feelings between different classes, to provide additional security for the continuance of peace, and to maintain contentment and happiness at home, by increasing the comforts and bettering the condition of the people.' ”

The measure, in spite of the furious opposition of the party of which the real leader was Mr. Disraeli, passed through the House of Commons more easily than might have been anticipated. After fifty-five speeches in favor of protection, and forty-eight in favor of free-trade, the second reading was carried by a majority of ninety-seven. An amendment proposed by Mr. Villiers, “That all duties on corn do now cease,” found only seventy-eight supporters. The third reading was passed, on May 15, by a majority of ninety-eight. Mainly owing to the influence of the Duke of Wellington, who advised his followers not to oppose it, the bill passed rapidly through the House of Lords. On June 26 it received the royal assent.

While the protectionists were uttering fiery tirades against the noblest act of the man whose public life, though not free from faults, had always been honest and courageous, by the country at large Sir Robert Peel was regarded with that veneration which self-sacrifice and devotion to principle rarely fail to inspire. As he had anticipated, and as was generally expected, he was speedily obliged to give up office by a combination of the votes of the Opposition and of the defeated monopolists. On June 29 he resigned, in a speech which forms one of the noblest efforts of his eloquence. After a generous tribute to Cobden, as the man whose name ought to be associated with the success of the measures which had established free-trade and abolished the Corn-laws, he went on to say: “I shall



leave behind me a name detested by every monopolist who clamors for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit; but it may be that I shall also leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good-will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labor and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened by the sense of injustice."

The work of the Anti-Corn-law League was now accomplished; and at a meeting held in the Manchester Town-hall, July 2, its operations were brought to a close. Only £50,000 of the proposed £250,000 fund was called up, out of which £10,000 were voted to Mr. George Wilson, the Chairman of the League. When, in 1852, the Derby-Disraeli ministry came into power, and it was feared that a protectionist policy would be adopted, the League was for a short time revived. But it was soon seen that, however much the remnant of the protectionist party might bluster while in opposition, it would never venture when in office to resume a policy of which the country thoroughly disapproved; and accordingly the League was a second time dissolved.

Cobden's devoted labors in advancing the cause of free-trade had necessitated his neglect of his private business, and, of course, he had suffered accordingly. To compensate him for his losses, a subscription on his behalf was started, to which money rapidly poured in. In 1848 he was presented with a testimonial of over £76,000. Of this sum he unfortunately invested part in American railway speculations which turned out badly, and involved him in considerable financial difficulties. A few of his old friends came nobly to his assistance in 1860, and privately presented him with a sum exceeding £40,000. Before his death, which occurred April 2, 1865, amid the universal regret even of those who had been his most strenuous opponents, he rendered a great service to the commercial world. In 1859-'60 he negotiated with the French government a treaty which did much to facilitate commercial intercourse be-

tween Great Britain and France. By this treaty, which, after having been renewed in 1870, expired at the close of 1880, great reductions were made in the scale of duties levied on British goods in France, and corresponding abatements in the British tariff on French wines, silks, and other articles.

Since the repeal of the Corn-laws British legislation has more and more advanced in the direction of free-trade, with what satisfactory results has been over and over proved by the clear evidence of statistical tables. We have not succeeded to so great an extent as Cobden and the other early apostles of free-trade hoped, in inducing other nations to follow in our footsteps; and hence there arises periodically, from industries suffering under a temporary depression, a cry for protection, under the new name of "Reciprocity." But the nation has gradually accepted the sound doctrine, that it is better to buy cheap, even if artificial obstacles make it impossible to sell dear; and there appears little reason to apprehend that it will ever depart from it.





## THE REPEAL OF THE FISCAL RESTRICTIONS UPON LITERATURE AND THE PRESS.

THOMAS MILNER GIBSON AND OTHERS.

IN the year 1712 the Tory ministers of Queen Anne, finding that the Whig Press by its ability, force of invective, and attractiveness was undermining their influence in the country, determined to place it under some severe restraints. With this view they imposed a stamp duty of a half-penny on every newspaper or pamphlet containing half a sheet or less, the tax rising to one penny on a whole sheet. "Grub Street has but ten days to live," writes Swift to Stella on July 17, 1712; "then an act of Parliament takes place that ruins it by taxing every half-sheet at a half-penny." Again, on August 7 of the same year, he writes: "Do you know that Grub Street is dead and gone last week? No more ghosts or murders now for love or money. I plied it pretty close the last fortnight, and published at least seven penny papers of my own, besides some of other people; but now every single half-sheet pays a half-penny to the Queen. The *Observer* is fallen; the *Medleys* are jumbled together with the *Flying Post*; the *Examiner* is deadly sick; the *Spectator* keeps up and doubles its price; I know not how long it will hold. Have you seen the red stamp the papers are marked with? Methinks it is worth a half-penny the stamping." At the same time as the stamp duty, a tax of one shilling on every advertisement, and also a duty on paper and foreign books, were imposed, which had the effect of still farther crippling the Press. These taxes on knowledge continued to exist, with various modifications, for

almost a century and a half. By gradual steps the stamp duty on newspapers rose, till in the reign of George III. it was increased to fourpence. After the passing of the Reform Act, the demand for cheap newspapers became so great that unstamped and illegal publications abounded. The government of Lord Melbourne, finding it impossible to suppress them by fines and imprisonment, reduced the duty to one penny in 1836. In the same year the paper duty, which had hitherto been three-pence per pound for certain qualities and three half-pence for others, was reduced to a uniform rate of three half-pence per pound; and the duty on advertisements, which had risen to the enormous sum of three shillings and sixpence for each advertisement in Great Britain and two shillings and sixpence in Ireland, was reduced to one shilling and sixpence in Great Britain and one shilling in Ireland. These reductions were largely brought about by the impossibility of suppressing the unstamped, and therefore cheap, newspapers circulated among those who could not afford to take in the stamped newspapers. The government prosecutions against Henry Hetherington, proprietor and editor of the *Poor Man's Guardian*, failed. His trial took place before Lord Lyndhurst, then Chief Baron of the Exchequer, in 1835. The jury, at the conclusion of the trial, returned a verdict of "Not guilty," as to the *Poor Man's Guardian* being an illegal publication. Hetherington conducted his own defence.

Thus we see that at the time when our narrative commences the taxes on knowledge were three in number; first, the stamp duty of one penny upon every newspaper; second, the advertisement duty of one shilling and sixpence for each advertisement; and third, the paper duty of three half-pence a pound. The introduction of penny postage, in 1840, had done much to quicken the national intelligence by linking into closer communication the different parts of the kingdom; and the gradually improving state of education, with the increasing knowledge resulting from the spread of Mechanics' Institutions and lending libraries, caused the various fiscal restrictions on the

Press to be every day felt more and more galling. Why, it was asked, should the government profess a desire for the education of the people, while at the same time, by the continuance of oppressive enactments, they withheld from them the most valuable means of self-improvement? Why, inquired ardent reformers, was the working-man, to whom the franchise was refused on account of ignorance, denied access to political knowledge by the imposts which made newspapers so highly priced as to be almost entirely out of his reach? Every one who had a doctrine to promulgate, an error to remove, or a grievance to lay before the public, was hampered in his operations by the taxes on books, periodicals, and newspapers. By the paper and stamp duties many capitalists were deterred from investing their money in newspapers. The details appalled them when laid before them. When disposed to order six hundred reams of paper—enough to last a daily journal about a month—they discovered to their consternation that, owing to the paper duty, the bill for six hundred reams would be £1450, and that to get them stamped would cost £1200 more. Thus they found that £2650 was required for paper and stamps alone for four weeks, supposing the sale to be twenty-five reams daily—12,500 of the size of the *Daily News* or *Chronicle* of that time. No wonder that cautious investors shrunk back in horror when they contemplated the enormous amount of capital required and the uncertainty of success.

Besides its direct results, the work of Richard Cobden and his associates in the Anti-Corn-law League had affected the country in two ways—it had given it a desire to have free-trade in everything, and it had shown it what great results might be achieved by steady, persistent, and skilful popular agitation. The lesson was not lost upon those desiring the repeal of the taxes on knowledge. “The taxes on a nation’s food,” said they, “have been long condemned; and, in some of the most important items, at length repealed. Taxes on knowledge, though often denounced, still continue. It is, however, high time for the country to achieve the emancipation



of the mind with a spirit as resolute as that which secured the liberties of the stomach. It is high time to repeal those spiritual window duties which exclude the light of heaven from the soul, as their antitypes, the light of heaven from our houses. To 'take the bread out of one's mouth' is not a more injurious proceeding than to deprive him who is anxious to learn of the means of improvement. He who says, 'Thou shalt not eat,' and he who says, 'Thou shalt not read,' are co-workers in the same cause of treachery and traitorism to the interests of universal humanity. It is high time, then, to unfetter thought, to loose the swaddling-bands of intellect, to abolish the 'passport' system of 'stamped' opinion, to remove every obstacle from the pathway of knowledge, whose 'running to and fro' was of old predicted as the harbinger and earnest of a brighter and a happier age."

Though we may take exception to the grandiloquent language of the above, its sentiments are unexceptionable, and they were shared by a large portion of the community. What well-disciplined organization could effect had been shown by the success of the Anti-Corn-law League; and the more strenuous advocates for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge determined to follow in its footsteps. In 1849 two societies, having the freedom of the Press from fiscal restrictions as their object, came into being simultaneously. One was designated the "Newspapers Stamp Abolition Committee," among the founders of which were the veteran foes of the taxes on knowledge, Henry Hetherington, James Watson, and Francis Place, who accepted the office of treasurer. At the suggestion of Mr. Cobden, this committee was developed into the "Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge." Of it Mr. Milner Gibson was president; Mr. C. Dobson Collet, secretary; Mr. Richard Moore, chairman; and Mr. Novello and Dr. Watts, treasurers. In the task to which it had set itself, this society rendered excellent services from beginning to end of the long struggle. Its energies were principally devoted to the repeal of the compulsory stamp upon newspapers, and it

was also largely helpful in reference to the repeal of the paper duty. The other society was designated, in the first instance, "The London Committee for Obtaining the Repeal of the Duty on Advertisements," and its action was entirely separate from the other association, although the two were in constant and hearty co-operation. Of this society William Ewart, Esq., M.P., was the president; Mr. McEnteer, honorary secretary; and Mr. John Francis, the publisher of the *Athenæum*, acting treasurer, and principal worker. When the advertisement duty had been repealed this society was revived, under the name of "The Newspaper Press Association for Obtaining the Repeal of the Paper Duty."

Although those agitating for the abolition of the three taxes on knowledge did not, while protesting against any one particular tax, forget to dwell on the evil done by the others, it will, we think, be found more convenient if, instead of narrating simultaneously the story of the abolition of the three taxes, we consider them one by one in the order of their repeal: first, the advertisement duty; second, the stamp duty; and third, the paper duty. Before commencing the story of the repeal of the advertisement duty, we may glance at the reception which awaited Mr. Milner Gibson's motion for the abolition of the taxes on knowledge in the House of Commons in 1850. In moving a series of resolutions declaring the expediency of repealing the excise duty on paper, the stamp on newspapers, the advertisement duty, and the customs' duty on foreign books, Mr. Milner Gibson said that the supply of literary and political knowledge to the public should be considered of higher value, and be treated upon less stringent terms, than were used with regard to the ordinary commodities of trade. But, instead of being treated with less stringency, literature was taxed more heavily and unjustly than all other articles. He concluded by moving the first resolution in his series, that for repealing the paper duty. Sir Charles Wood (now Lord Halifax), the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, in opposing the motion, said that, while declining to assert that the remission

of the taxes on knowledge might not thereafter be considered, he opposed any present move in that direction solely upon financial considerations. Lord John Russell, while speaking in a similar strain, took the opportunity of making an assault upon the cheap Press of the Continent. "Compared with other countries," said his lordship, "where newspapers sold for a half-penny propagated principles that rendered all government impossible, and a multitude of school-masters who talked doctrine to make religion odious, the Press and condition of England were eminently felicitous." It is noteworthy that in this debate Mr. Disraeli spoke strongly in favor of Mr. Milner Gibson's motion. He found himself, however, in a small minority. Only eighty-nine members voted in favor of the motion, while one hundred and ninety voted against it. Mr. Disraeli's vote is said to have driven away a number of Liberal members, who would have voted against the Government in a minority, but shrunk from the chance of carrying the motion they professed to support. The remaining resolutions were negatived without a division.

#### THE ADVERTISEMENT DUTY.

There were several causes which combined to make sagacious observers think that the advertisement duty would be repealed sooner, and with less difficulty, than any of the other taxes on knowledge. In the first place, it produced the least money, so that Chancellors of the Exchequer were not likely to cling to it with such fond tenacity as to the stamp and paper duties. It amounted in 1849 only to the comparatively trifling sum of (in round numbers) £150,000; while the stamp duty came to £396,000, and the paper duty to £745,000. In the second place, it was not a tax upon knowledge merely; it was a tax upon commerce, and as such was felt to press heavily upon every one throughout the kingdom who sought a market for his goods or for his labor. The tradesman could not advertise his "wonderful cheap sale" under a price which detracted severely from his profits; while the maid-servant seek-

ing a place had to disburse three shillings of her slender earnings, for that was the lowest rate at which an advertisement could be inserted in a newspaper. "The tax on advertisements," wrote Douglas Jerrold, in a letter addressed in 1852 to Mr. Milner Gibson, "is, it is patent, a tax even upon the industry of the very hardest workers. Why should the Chancellor of the Exchequer waylay the errand-boy, and oppress the maid-of-all-work? Wherefore should Mary Anne be made to disburse her one shilling and sixpence at the Stamp-office ere she can show her face in print, wanting a place, although to the discomfiture of these first-created Chancellors of the Exchequer—the spiders?" Commercial men pointed to the United States, where, owing to the absence of the duty, five advertisements were published for every one that saw the light in this country, and asked, How can we compete with a country which has thus the advantage, without let or hinderance, of being able to intercommunicate all the mutual wants of its people? Moreover, its repeal was powerfully opposed by no one. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was disposed to admit that it *ought* to be repealed, and advocated its retention for financial reasons only; while the newspaper Press were practically unanimous in favor of its abolition. Even the *Times*, to whose great influence the advocates for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge owed nothing of their success, could find little to say in behalf of its retention. "In defence of the advertisement duty," it declared (February 27, 1852), "there is little to be said, except, perhaps, that it is not what it is termed—a 'tax upon knowledge.' But it is a tax which encumbers and shackles the communication of reciprocal wants, and which falls with excessive severity on a portion of the population least able to endure it. The one shilling and sixpence exacted by the Stamp-office from an artisan or house-maid out of work, and from applicants who, by their very demand for employment, may be considered for the most part in at least temporary need, is a contribution to the national revenue which a judicious minister would be disposed to excuse. It will be



said, perhaps, that it is not the poorest or the least prosperous class who resort to this public expression of their desires, and that advertisers generally find their account in the returns they experience. This may be true; but, on the other hand, it should be recollected how many are debarred from the like opportunity by the addition of one shilling and sixpence to its cost. A professed cook or a military messman may obtain a new place at an expense proportionately small, but there can be no reason why the less skilled servant should be excluded by an oppressive tax from a similar advantage."

Though all these arguments, and many others, were often placed before the public and those in authority, it was not till after a pretty long and severe struggle that the abolition was conceded. A motion made in the House of Commons on March 7, 1850, that the advertisement duty be repealed, was negatived by a majority of 169. In February, 1851, a representative deputation of gentlemen connected with the London Press, including Mr. Murdo Young of the *Sun*, Mr. Knight Hunt of the *Daily News*, Mr. Grant of the *Morning Advertiser*, Mr. Francis of the *Athenæum*, Mr. Ingram of the *Illustrated London News*, etc.—along with three members of Parliament, the Hon. C. P. Villiers, Sir James Duke, and Mr. W. Ewart—waited on Sir Charles Wood, to place before him their case for the abolition of the advertisement duty, the ground taken being mainly the hinderance of this tax upon the spread of literature, and upon trade and labor seeking a market through newspaper publicity. To show to what an enormous extent the people in America, where there was no duty payable, availed themselves of advertising, Mr. Grant handed to the Chancellor copies of the *New York Journal of Commerce* and the *New York Courier*, each containing a number of advertisements far beyond what was then to be seen in any English newspaper—upward of 2000 in each. Sir Charles Wood, having examined them carefully, exclaimed, "Why, it's enough to make a Chancellor of the Exchequer's mouth water to see such a sea of taxable matter?" Others of the deputation



showed with what singular inequality the tax pressed upon the public. If the Duke of Northumberland wanted to sell an estate worth £100,000 he would be called on to pay no more for his advertisement duty than the poor servant-girl in want of a place. Mr. Francis related the manner in which the proprietors of one of the dioramas in London contrived to advertise their concern without paying duty, namely, by inflating balloons, and attaching to them a great number of tickets of admission to their exhibition. These tickets, after the balloon had risen a certain height in the air, were scattered about in all directions, and the finders of them were entitled to admission to the exhibition at half-price, on condition of writing on the tickets the places where they had been respectively picked up. Mr. Francis produced some of these tickets which had been used, and others ready to be sent up, weather permitting. Mr. Ingram, of the *Illustrated London News*, complained that he paid more in many cases for the advertisement duty than he received for the advertisements. Many of his advertising customers took credit for an exceedingly long time, and it frequently happened that he never received a farthing of the amount due from them. To all the statements and suggestions of the deputation Sir Charles Wood listened with the utmost good-humor and attention, but steadfastly declined pledging himself as to what course he should adopt.

On March 19, 1851, some weeks after the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been thus interviewed, a similar deputation waited on Lord John Russell, the Prime-minister. In introducing the deputation Mr. Ewart took occasion to remark on the vast variety of modes that were constantly being taken to evade the tax—modes more ingenious than honest. For example, it was the general practice to insert advertisements in books and other publications, on which no duty at all was levied. These advertisements were clearly within the meaning of the statute and liable to duty, but it was well known that no duty at all was levied. The tax was only exacted on those published in newspapers, reviews, magazines, and periodicals of that kind.

He also referred to the new plan adopted at some of the railway stations, of allotting certain spaces for the purpose of advertising, professedly to obviate the necessity of putting advertisements in the newspapers at all. The deputation thought it hard, not only that those who advertised their wants or their wares in newspapers should be so heavily mulcted, but that others, who ingeniously sought out other ways of advertising, should escape payment of the duty altogether. Mr. Francis dwelt upon the pressure of the tax on the exertions of literary men. Everybody, he said, knew that his lordship took a deep interest in the education of the people, and he could assure him that the gentlemen present were fully alive to that most important question. They were there that day to ask that his lordship would give a practical expression of his own views by repealing this tax. Its direct tendency was to restrict the publication and circulation of books of an educational character; and by its abolition the cause of education would be advanced to an extent that at first sight might hardly appear possible. Another member of the deputation pointed out that the advertisement of a book for children cost just as much as that for Macaulay's "History of England;" and Mr. James Grant, in stating that he had been informed by Mr. Colburn, the publisher, that he considered no book properly advertised under an expenditure of from seventy to one hundred pounds, remarked that there was a close connection between the sale of a book and the extent of its advertisements, and that, if the duty were removed, publishers would be able to advertise to a much greater extent. Lord John Russell thanked the deputation for the information afforded, but declined to pledge himself to the adoption of any course.

Though no practical result followed immediately from these interviews, they were far from being useless, insomuch as, by the reports in the newspapers, they made the country acquainted with the facts of the case, and paved the way for future action. In March, 1853, a deputation of the same nature as those mentioned above waited upon Mr. Gladstone, at that time Chan-

cellor of the Exchequer, on the subject of the advertisement tax. The deputation was introduced by Mr. Ewart, who read the following ten objections to the duty (drawn up by Mr. Francis), which contain, in a clear and succinct form, all the various arguments that were advanced against it:

“I. Because it is a tax on knowledge, and falls with partiality on an important portion of the Press—the newspaper, magazine, and periodical. All other means of advertising escape the duty.

“II. It is an unjust tax. It cannot be equitably assessed or collected. The rich man pays only one shilling and sixpence to advertise the sale of an estate; the poor man pays one shilling and sixpence to advertise for employment.

“III. It falls on particular classes of property, impeding to an important extent advertisements in journals. In America any man who wishes to lend or to hire, to buy or to sell, announces his wish, without being subject to any duty, for one shilling.

“IV. It acts most injuriously upon literary works striving at cheapness. The cost of advertising sometimes amounts to more than the whole profit of author and publisher on works which are successful.

“V. It is a tax which goes far to fetter the free extension of the Press, and prevents the circulation of a sound and wholesome literature among working-men. In America there are 350 daily papers; in England there are only ten.

“VI. It creates a monopoly. It is only the comparatively prosperous tradesman who can afford to advertise: the intelligent mechanic is excluded from newspaper publicity.

“VII. It is one among many of the fiscal errors committed when the true principles of taxation were comparatively unknown. It involves the same principle by which the lowest-priced Bohea is taxed at the same rate as the highest-priced Pekoe or Souchong—on which the miserable shirt-maker is compelled to pay a duty of about three hundred per cent. on the original value of the article which she consumes, while the rich pay about eighty per cent. only.

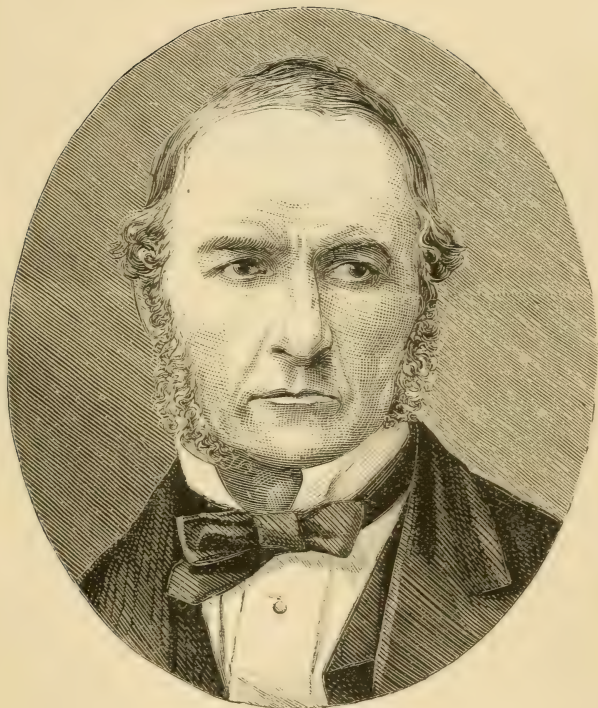
“VIII. It is a tax that should be repealed, because the public would derive the full benefit of the repeal. In many cases a larger reduction than the duty would be made by newspaper proprietors.

“IX. It is a tax which is easily and largely evaded. The blank wall, the advertising van (dangerously blocking up the public thoroughfares), the omnibus, the railway carriage, the railway station, the street pavement, and many other modes of advertising, reduce the amount paid to government to a comparatively small amount, and leave its pressure exactly where it is most severely felt, and where many grounds of public policy condemn it.

“X. In a word, it is a great impediment to trade, literature, and labor seeking a market through publicity—and to the newspaper Press for that reason; while the small amount of revenue which it yields—about £160,000 per annum—renders it altogether unworthy of retention, at the cost of a tithe of the hardship and injury which it inflicts.”

A conversation then ensued with reference to the objectionable features of the tax, and its effect upon short advertisements was specially pressed upon the attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. One of the deputation called Mr. Gladstone's attention to the injury inflicted by it on the provincial newspapers, in consequence of the speed and facility with which the London newspapers were carried into the country. “The provincial editor,” he said, “has little to interest his readers beyond some few articles of local news, and, from the immense burden which the advertisement duty imposes on him, he is not in a position to employ the literary talent which he would otherwise be enabled to do. The generality of the tax, and its equality of amount, whether charged upon papers which circulate 5000 or 500, is another point which weighs with unusual severity upon the provincial Press. If I were the Chancellor of the Exchequer I should venture to repeal the whole of the tax to-morrow, because I am satisfied that the increase of the amount paid on the penny stamp and the paper





WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE.



BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
LIBRARY

duties would more than replace to the revenue that lost by the reduction." Another gentleman, Mr. Cooke, observed that, from his experience as an advertising agent, he could assure the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the pressure of the duty had great effect in deterring advertisers from advertising to the extent which they would have done had it not been so great. He had recently known a case in which a tradesman intending to spend one hundred and fifty pounds in short advertisements, on hearing that forty-five pounds would go to the government in the shape of duty, had been frightened at the apparently useless expense, and instantly reduced his advertisements to fifty pounds. It is deserving of mention that it was admitted by all the gentlemen present that the reduction of the duty to sixpence would afford material relief to the advertising public; and it was urged that while in a short time no loss of revenue would ensue from the total repeal, owing to the compensating effect of increased stamp and paper duties, the reduction of the duty to sixpence would most probably be attended with an immediate increase of revenue.

Supposing the duty had been reduced to sixpence, it is likely that the reduction would have been very unsatisfactory to many, and all but certain that total repeal would have followed in a very short time. Most people were of the opinion expressed by the *Times*, that the advertisement duty was not worth its keep. The "Thunderer" was loud in its denunciations of the illegitimate modes of advertising. "There are," it said (February 9, 1853), "the advertising vans—enormous wooden fabrics, plastered or pasted over with announcements about 'Eureka Shirts,' 'Safety Braces,' 'Transcendental Strops,' and the newest volcano in combustion at the Surrey Zoological Gardens. Is it at all compatible with the safety or comfort of any person who is compelled to frequent the great public thoroughfares that these monstrous edifices should be dragged along the street? In the first place, they frighten the horses, and no wonder. Any candid man would acknowledge that if he were a horse, and consequently unable to decipher print or to appreciate pictorial

art, he would feel uncomfortable if an attempt were made to whip him past one of these threatening edifices. In the next place, they choke the passage. Can anything be more aggravating to a wretched creature who has but just time sufficient to 'save the rail,' than to be stopped behind one of those prodigies which officiously recommend him to make trial of the 'Hydrodynamic Filterer,' or to visit the 'Ekkaleobeaon,' in Leicester Square—as if that would better his case? It must be remembered that the interest of the proprietors of these machines is adverse to that of the public."

The days of the advertisement duty were now very nearly numbered. On April 14, 1853, Mr. Milner Gibson moved the following resolutions in the House of Commons: "1. That the advertisement duty ought to be repealed. 2. That the policy of restraining the cheap periodical Press from narrating current events, by rendering it liable to stamp duties and other restrictions, 'if any public news, intelligence or occurrences, or any remarks or observations thereon be contained therein,' is inexpedient, and at variance with the desire now generally expressed in favor of the diffusion of knowledge among all classes; and it appears also to this House that the law relative to taxes on newspapers, and other regulations affecting public prints, is in an unsatisfactory state, and demands the attention of Parliament. 3. That the excise duty on paper, while impeding the development of an important manufacture, also materially obstructs the production of good cheap literature; and the maintenance of this tax, as a permanent source of revenue, would be impolitic and inconsistent with the efforts which Parliament is now making to promote education among the great body of the people."

In a long and singularly able and conclusive speech, which occupies over five columns in the *Times* report, Mr. Milner Gibson took up the taxes on knowledge one by one, and stated the case against them. Leaving for consideration afterward the portions in which he dwelt upon the paper and stamp duties, we may here mention some of his arguments against

the tax on advertisements. "If a man," he said, "made an announcement by word of mouth, no duty was put upon it; if he made it by the crier, no duty was put upon it; if he used an advertising-van, no duty was put upon it; but if he had it printed on paper frequently and periodically, then the exciseman interposed and charged him with a duty of one shilling and sixpence for each announcement, thus making it the direct interest of everybody to avoid making announcements in that manner; and, as the tax was only leviable in the case of announcements being made periodically, it was a direct hindering of the growth of the newspaper and of the periodical Press." Referring to the effects of the tax on advertisements of charitable institutions and charitable schemes, he said what a monstrous thing it was, when the *Amazon* steamship was lost, or the Irish famine occurred, and it became necessary by repeated advertisements to arrest public attention to these calamities, that the exciseman required one shilling and sixpence to be paid on every one of these announcements, thus converting the advertisement duty into a tax on calamity, and causing the funds of the subscribers, who fancied they were contributing to the relief of the Irish famine, or the orphans and widows of the men who were lost in the *Amazon*, to contribute to state necessity, and to pay a portion of their money to the revenue! Speaking of the loss that the abolition of the duty would cause to the revenue, he endeavored to show that the additional letters that would be sent through the post, in reply to the immensely increased number of advertisements there would be when the duty was abolished, would go far to make that up. He concluded by saying, that separate divisions would be taken upon each resolution, and that, therefore, those who could not support them all might vote for one or more of them.

Mr. Ewart, in seconding the motion, said he supported it mainly because he believed that the abolition of these duties would be favorable to the causes of knowledge and of order. He considered that it would be vain to found schools, to establish libraries, or to take any other means for extending information

to the people, if they did not encourage among them a knowledge of the current literature of the day ; and these taxes were not taxes upon the accumulated stores of knowledge, but upon what might be called the current coin and circulating medium of instruction. The Speaker having put the question on the first resolution, " That the advertisement duty ought to be repealed," Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, rose, and in the course of a long speech proceeded to give his reasons for not being able to acquiesce in Mr. Milner Gibson's proposal. His opposition was based solely upon financial considerations. Very few statesmen in 1853 would have thought of advocating the taxes on knowledge because they restricted the Press, though this was the ground Lord Ellenborough took when speaking on behalf of the Newspaper Stamp Act in 1819. " It was not," sagely observed his lordship on that occasion, " against the respectable Press that this bill was directed, but against a pauper Press, which, administering to the prejudices and the passions of a mob, which was converted to the basest purposes—which was an utter stranger to truth, and only sent forth a continual stream of falsehood and malignity—its virulence and its mischief heightening as it proceeded. If he was asked whether he would deprive the lower classes of society of all political information, he would say that he saw no possible good to be derived to the country from having statesmen at the loom and politicians at the spinning-jenny." Compared with language like this, Mr. Gladstone's defence of the retention of the taxes on knowledge shows how far public opinion had advanced on the subject since 1819. He was quite at one with those who opposed the taxes in the abstract. He entirely agreed, he said, that we ought not to seek to restrain the cheap periodical Press from narrating current events by restrictions and duties, under any notion that it ought to be regarded as otherwise than capable of being made a great engine of public instruction and public utility. He stated in the most distinct terms that the government had no wish to retain, and would not retain, any restraint whatever upon the



Press for the sake of restraint; that for them the question would be a purely fiscal question; and that the claims of newspapers for relief from taxation, if it could be shown (as probably it might be) that they paid more than an equivalent for the service they received, should meet with fair consideration. He regretted that the state of the revenue would not permit him to assent to Mr. Milner Gibson's proposals, and concluded by moving the previous question.

Among the many other speakers who followed Mr. Gladstone—almost all of whom were in favor of Mr. Milner Gibson's motion—three stand out conspicuous: Mr. Bright, Mr. Disraeli, and Mr. Cobden. Mr. Bright, in reply to Mr. Gladstone, said the speech of Mr. Milner Gibson had not received anything like an answer. These duties were not brought forward as unjust taxes, but as instruments which restrained the Press; and it was high time that a government professing a regard for education should abolish them. It was not a question of revenue, for it could be demonstrated that, if the stamp and advertisement duties were abolished, the loss of revenue would be so small as not to be worth putting in the balance against the advantages that would arise from the abolition. Mr. Disraeli said he was ready to vote for the repeal of the advertisement duty, as that was a policy he had previously been prepared to propose to the House. Mr. Cobden, who was no less ardent in favor of the freedom of the Press from vexatious imposts than he had been in favor of the freedom of trade, and who had taken part in several public meetings held to protest against the taxes on knowledge, said that, in his desire to see those taxes abolished, he accepted the assistance of Mr. Disraeli and his friends with all his heart. From this it will be seen that the division which followed was not a party one, except in the sense that probably a good many Tories voted in favor of Mr. Milner Gibson's motion in order to embarrass the Liberal Government, and that a good many Liberals may have followed their leaders, although not approving of their policy. The House having divided on the previous ques-

tion, the numbers were: ayes, 200; noes, 169 — a majority against the government of 31. The first resolution, that the advertisement duty be repealed, was then agreed to without a division. The two other resolutions were rejected by large majorities.

Still adhering to his opinion that the state of the finances of the country would not allow him to do away altogether with the advertisement duty, Mr. Gladstone, in his Budget speech of 1853, proposed to reduce it to 6*d*. Before the evening was concluded, many members, having heard the main features of the Budget explained, and thinking there was nothing to detain them longer, had left. But, when the matter came to be reported to the House, some member proposed that, instead of the advertisement duty being represented by a 6, it should be represented by a 0. This motion was put to the vote and carried by a majority of nine. Next day Mr. Gladstone said that he would accept the decision of the previous night, as expressing the sense of the House on the question of the repeal of the advertisement duty, which was therefore carried, at the moment somewhat unexpectedly, by a narrow majority of nine. On August 4, 1853, it ceased to exist.

#### THE STAMP DUTY.

Viewed merely as a tax on knowledge, the advertisement duty cannot be reckoned of so much importance as the stamp duty. It imposed a great hinderance on the spread of commercial intercourse, and, as we have seen, it prevented publishers from making popular and educational works so widely known as was desirable; but it did not directly limit the growth of the Press and fetter its circulation, as the stamp duty did. At first sight, a duty of one penny, which carried with it the privilege of free transmission through the post, does not appear an impost of a very onerous nature. But when one recalls all the various objections to the tax, they are so numerous and so strong, that one is tempted to wonder how it could have existed so long when there were so

many powerful arguments against it. We shall go over a few of them.

In the first place, it hindered the instruction of the working-classes. On this point no more unimpeachable witness can be brought forward than Lord Brougham. Here is his testimony, as expressed in a letter to Mr. Milner Gibson: "The stamp is by far the most hurtful of those bad taxes in one essential particular. The instruction of the working-classes in the country districts, where it is most wanted, has been entirely prevented by it. When the Useful Knowledge Society made, for years, efforts of every kind to diffuse sound information among the peasantry in the villages, cottages, and farm-houses, we were always met and defeated by this stamp. Our only chance of making these people read was by wrapping up good information of a lasting value in news — especially news respecting farming matters and things in their own neighborhood. But the penny stamp made this impossible. The paper of twelve octavo pages, of which four would have been newspaper and the other eight of a more general description and more permanent value, instructive or entertaining, or both, could easily have been sold for one penny, after the necessary allowance to the hawker or other retail dealer. The history of the *Penny Magazine* shows this. But the vast circulation (at one time 220,000) enabled us to sell so costly a work very cheaply. I am now referring to what would be more cheaply produced, and have a much more limited circulation; but it could only be done were there no stamp. That makes it quite impossible; and all our plans so far failed that we could not diffuse knowledge where it was most wanted. Our books were read, and they did great service, and still do, besides having brought down the price of all books. But, like Mechanics' Institutions, we have not yet got low enough in society; and that we owe to the stamp, because we found that mere cheapness did not make the most ignorant class readers; another stimulus was wanted—news. Of course, my remarks apply also to people in the towns; but they have both more helps and, from their

social habits, more excitement than the people in the country. The lowering of the stamp from fourpence to a penny I really can hardly regard as a benefit at all, if it was a sacrifice of revenue, for it only relieved two classes who required no relief: it put considerable sums in the pockets of newspaper proprietors, and it saved you and me a few pounds a year, to whom this was but of little importance. It did not enable us to help general education at all."

A second great objection to the stamp duty was, that it prevented local newspapers from being started. Every one knows that in small country places the account of the marriage of the squire, of the village flower-show, or of Bill Sykes's latest poaching exploit, which the little local paper gives, is read with an interest which the most powerful leader in the *Times*, or the most sensational narrative of "Our Special Correspondent," would fail to excite. By the Stamp Act district newspapers were almost prohibited. The freedom of transmission by post was of very little benefit to them, for their contents were not of a nature to interest beyond a limited circle; and the additional expense which the duty entailed made proprietors hesitate very much before laying out their money in setting on foot a paper which at the best could never be largely remunerative. The consequence of the rarity of small local newspapers was, that large sections of the agricultural community never saw a newspaper at all; since, as Mr. Bright well observed in 1853, in his speech on Mr. Milner Gibson's motion, for those classes of which the agricultural laborers might be taken as constituting the chief portion, a London newspaper was too large, too extensive, treating of matters which, to their limited information, were entirely foreign, and which were beyond their understanding. A London newspaper gave more news than a man of that class had heart or power to read: he had not broad enough knowledge of history, of geography, of the world, to relish the mass of information to be found in a London newspaper. He wanted something more applicable to his own condition, something more local, and that he could not get.



A third objection, somewhat of the same nature as the foregoing, was, that the Stamp Act prevented the circulation of newspapers appealing to particular orders of society. The working-man found little pleasure in reading the *Times*, or the *Morning Herald*, or the *Morning Post*; he felt that such papers did not appeal to him at all, and that their sympathy with his aspirations and wishes was very mediocre indeed; and he longed for some cheap newspaper which should address itself to the class to which he belonged. But the stamp duty prevented any such newspaper from being published at a price sufficiently low to attain a paying circulation.

One of the greatest and most telling arguments against the duty was the uncertainty and frequent absurdity of its operation. For example, the privilege of free transmission by post, which the stamp entailed, was frequently abused, owing to an unfortunate Treasury minute, which declared that if a person registered a publication and called it a newspaper, it might have all the postal facilities of a newspaper proper. An amusing instance of how this minute worked was related by Mr. Milner Gibson, in his great speech of April 14, 1853. A Mr. Savory printed a trade-circular which contained a number of drawings of candlesticks, snuffer-trays, candelabra, etc., with the view of circulating it through the country as an advertisement. In order to get the benefit of the newspaper post (it must be remembered that the rate for unstamped publications was then one penny per half-ounce), he went to the Board of Inland Revenue, and made a declaration that his circular was a newspaper (which it was not), and, having made that declaration, swore—which, in his character of newspaper publisher, he was bound to do—that he was worth £400 over and above the sum necessary to pay his debts. He then found two securities to the extent of £400 each, who bound themselves to be forthcoming to pay any penalties he might incur, if in his circular of snuffer-trays or candelabra he should be guilty of publishing “any blasphemous or seditious libel.” These formalities over, Mr. Savory received a supply of stamped paper, and



had the privilege of being able to send his circular free by post.

The source of a great many angry disputes between the Inland Revenue and newspaper proprietors was the difficulty of defining what constituted a taxable "newspaper." A famous case, illustrating this difficulty, is found in the government prosecution of the *Household Narrative of Current Events*, a monthly periodical conducted by Charles Dickens, which, in addition to whatever good it may have done in other respects, served to point many a moral and adorn many a tale of the advocates of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge. The government entered into a prosecution for penalties against its proprietors, on the ground that it consisted wholly of news. The prosecution, it was said, was commenced to test the law and put down that class of monthlies. "A pretty policy," indignantly observed Mr. Milner Gibson in one of his speeches, "when they talked of educating the people, to attempt to prevent a man, with a heart and intellect like Mr. Dickens, from addressing the greatest possible number of his countrymen, by stupid laws which were a disgrace to the legislature!" The prosecution failed; and although the government at first intended to get the decision of the Judges reversed, the matter was finally allowed to drop. With a large amount of capital and influence to back it up, a paper like the *Household Narrative* had a fair chance of coming out successful in a contest against the government, but what chance had a poor little struggling local monthly newspaper? It had no money to defray the expenses of legal proceedings, and so, at the first threat from the Board of Inland Revenue, was obliged either to cease to exist or to get itself stamped.

To add to the difficulties connected with the administration of the law relating to the newspaper stamp, it had been brought into a most inconsistent and anomalous state by a succession of indulgences which were made for the benefit of class publications. "That anomalous state of the law," said Sir G. C. Lewis, in his speech on the Stamp Act (March 19, 1855),

“grew out of relaxations which were introduced for the purpose of meeting the views of a species of periodical publications which are now known by the name of class newspapers. The first case, as I understand, in which a relaxation was admitted was that of the *Literary Gazette*, which contained merely reviews, and was not a newspaper within the strict meaning of the law. It was found, however, by the managers of that newspaper that it would be convenient that a portion of its circulation should enjoy the privilege of the stamp, in order that it might be transmitted through the Post-office; accordingly, a few lines of political news were introduced, in order to qualify it for the newspaper stamp. In that manner the principle was established of partly stamped and partly unstamped impressions. That principle was afterward extended to a large number of periodical publications relating to subjects which interested peculiar classes—such, for instance, as the members of different professions. There were publications relating to law, to medicine, to architecture, to horticulture, and to various other subjects; and in all these cases the rule was established, that they should not be considered as newspapers subject to the compulsory tax, but that a portion of the impression might be stamped for admission through the Post-office. After a time a portion of these periodical publications introduced news in the proper sense of the word. It was not political news, but it was literary news, or it related to the legal, medical, or other professions; and there can be no doubt that, according to the strict construction of the law, a large number of the class publications which enjoyed a practical immunity from the stamp were newspapers, and were liable to a penalty if any portion of their impression were unstamped.” Practically, though not legally, a publication confining itself to one class of subjects was not a newspaper. It was formally stated by a responsible authority that the *Legal Observer* might, with propriety, give any information relative to Papal aggression, provided it merely gave what lawyers thought of it, because that kind of news would be interesting

to a class—viz., lawyers. It had also been stated that a report of a meeting of lawyers on Papal aggression in the *Legal Observer* would not be news; but that, if it contained a report of a meeting of clergymen, penalties would be incurred! It will readily be perceived that, in the administration of a law subject to hair-splittings and quibblings such as the foregoing, numerous cases of injustice and partiality must necessarily occur. If all the newspapers which infringed the strict letter of the law had been proceeded against, there would have been such a cry of indignation from one end of the land to the other as would have rendered the strongest government unstable. The authorities, therefore, did not attempt to do this, but contented themselves by attacking any unfortunate newspaper which had particularly attracted their attention; and, by so doing, justly laid themselves open to the charge of a partial administration of the law.

Against the many strong arguments for the abolition of the tax, two only were brought forward in favor of its retention. The first and strongest of these was, that fiscal considerations did not justify its abolition. Two answers were given to this objection. In the first place, as was often pointed out, knowledge was not a fit subject for taxation; and, in the second place, the comparatively trifling loss to the revenue, some £400,000, would be in large measure made up by the increase in the number of newspapers that would follow the abolition of the compulsory stamp. Another argument for the retention of the stamp was, that its abolition would be dangerous to society. Some fanatics went so far as to say that it would open the gates of sedition and blasphemy, and inundate the country with a licentious and immoral Press. This argument, if such it may be called, was well refuted, from facts supplied him by Mr. John Francis, by Sir George Cornewall Lewis, in his speech already referred to. "We are not," he said, "left merely to conjecture on indirect evidence with reference to the conduct and character of a cheap, unstamped Press. There is already in existence a large class of publications which, not containing news, are exempt from the stamp, are printed at a very cheap rate,

and circulated most extensively through the country. Now, though these publications do not contain news, yet, if it were true that the people of this country have so insatiable an appetite for immoral and licentious reading as some seem to ascribe to them, they would possess a very different character from what they actually exhibit. I beg to call the attention of the committee to some of these publications. There is the *Illustrated London News*, which is sold for sixpence; and although it is published only hebdomadally, I think it is second, or nearly second, in point of circulation to the *Times*. The *Illustrated News* is so very well-known a publication that I need scarcely say that its contents are perfectly unexceptionable, and that it obtains admission to almost every respectable family in the kingdom. But there are other periodicals that are unstamped which are sold at a lower price, and which circulate very widely among the poorer classes. One of these is a periodical of which I confess that I never heard the name until recently, and, perhaps, the same may be said of some other members of the House: I mean a penny weekly publication called the *London Journal*, which, I am convinced, upon very sufficient evidence, circulates 510,000, or more than half a million copies per week, or equal to 26,520,000 per annum—a circulation, in fact, exceeding by 10,000,000 that of the *Times*, though it appears only once a week. I have examined certain numbers of this periodical, and find that it somewhat resembles the *Penny Magazine*, which was well known several years ago. The *London Journal* appears to me to be perfectly unexceptionable in point of morality; its matter may not, indeed, be of the most instructive character—it is, in fact, rather amusing than instructive—but certainly it does not at all correspond with the very frightful picture of cheap periodicals which has been drawn to us by the objectors to the repeal of the compulsory stamp. There is another publication, similar in its character—the *Family Herald*—which circulates about 240,000 weekly, or at the rate of 12,500,000 per annum. It is also somewhat analogous to the *Penny Magazine*. . . . These facts must be considered as show-



ing that the spontaneous taste of the poorer classes of readers in this country, as regards cheap, unstamped periodicals, leads them to prefer a species of literature wholly innocuous in its character, and quite free from all the dangerous elements which have been held up to our fears. Now, let us look to the reverse of the picture. Some years ago, I am informed, there were five or six publications in London of a very different character from the foregoing. Among them were the *Town* and others of a similarly licentious character. The illustrations they contained corresponded with the letter-press. They obtained a certain circulation; but a gentleman [Mr. Francis] who made an inquiry into the subject a few years since, and who recently completed his inquiry, informs me that the entire class of publications of this nature is now extinct. . . . It may, I believe, be said with perfect truth that no immoral or licentious publication has a long life, or obtains an extensive popularity."

The first step gained by the opponents of the compulsory stamp was the appointment of a Parliamentary committee, of which Mr. Milner Gibson was chairman, in 1851, to inquire into the question. This committee reported that there were numerous objections to the system then in vogue. These objections arose from the difficulty of defining and determining the meaning of the term "news;" from the inequalities which existed in the application of the act, and the anomalies and evasions which it occasioned in postal arrangements; from the unfair competition to which stamped newspapers were exposed with unstamped publications; from the limitations imposed by the stamp on the circulation of the best newspapers; and from the impediments it threw in the way of the diffusion of useful knowledge regarding current and recent events among the poorer classes, which species of knowledge, relating to subjects which most obviously interested them, called out the intelligence by awakening the curiosity of these classes. The report then proceeded to say: "How far it may be expedient that this tax should be maintained as a source of revenue, either in its present or in any modified form, your committee do not feel



themselves called upon to state; other considerations, not within their province, would enter into that question. But, apart from fiscal considerations, they do not consider that news is of itself a desirable subject of taxation."

Though this report was not attended by any immediate practical results, it had good effects, and was useful as an authoritative document for the advocates of the repeal of the tax to point to in enforcing their case. During the whole struggle for the repeal of the stamp duty, the Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge rendered invaluable service. Its indefatigable secretary, Mr. C. Dobson Collet, spared no pains in bringing forward cases to convince the government that the law would either have to be repealed or changed, as it could not be enforced. He had made the laws on the Press his peculiar study; and, as Mr. John Francis once observed, "if he could discover a flaw into which he could insert the point of a penknife, the government or the Stamp-office authorities were sure to hear of it." The society with which he was connected fostered certain productions evading the Stamp Act, the principal *raison d'être* of which appears to have been, that by forcing the authorities to take notice of them, the whole question of the stamp duty might be brought to an issue. One of these evasions, of which, however, the Association had no knowledge, we have seen. It is a four-page quarto periodical, printed on rag, entitled "The Greenock News Clout, an Unstamped Periodical, designed as a legal successor to 'Young Greenock,' 'Aurora,' and 'Quilp's Budget,' all declared by the Solicitor of Stamps to be illegal, and against the first an information is now pending in the Court of Exchequer." Its date is July 11, 1849. Its contents are mostly of a semi-satirical nature, with a few fragments of news and some original poems interspersed. The publication, in its new form, sought to evade the act under the plea that it was not a newspaper, being printed on *linen*.

In 1854 Mr. Milner Gibson, who had followed up the report of the committee of 1851 by bringing the question before Par-

liament every session, at last obtained a victory. In that year he proposed a resolution in the following terms: "That it is the opinion of this House that the laws in reference to the periodical Press and newspaper stamp are ill-defined and unequally enforced; and it appears to this House that the subject demands the early attention of Parliament." This resolution was agreed to unanimously. Lord Aberdeen's government was in power when it was passed, and the subject of the Stamp Act came, during the recess, under the consideration of Mr. Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, who prepared a bill dealing with it. As the administration to which he belonged had to quit office in the beginning of 1855, his bill was never discussed in Parliament. It was, however, much more complete than the plan submitted to the House on March 19, 1855, by Sir George Cornewall Lewis, Mr. Gladstone's successor in the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The gist of the scheme proposed by Sir G. C. Lewis, in the elaborate speech to which reference has been already once or twice made, was to legalize what at the time was only tacitly sanctioned with respect to class publications, such as the *Athenæum*, the *Builder*, the *Medical Times*, the *Medical Gazette*, and others of that description, and to extend the same privilege to all newspapers. Such papers would be permitted by law to follow the method of publication which they then practised in defiance of, or at least unsanctioned by, the law—that is, their proprietors would be permitted to publish them with a stamp or not, as they thought fit; and the same legislation would be extended to all newspapers, which would be permitted to stamp that portion of their impression which they wished to transmit by post, and to publish that portion which was independent of transmission by the post without a stamp.\* To this arrange-

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\* It may here be mentioned that, even when stamped, newspapers were transmitted through the post only beyond a certain radius, within which the papers had to be delivered from the office of publication. In some cases the plan was adopted of sending such copies as had to be delivered locally, beyond the limits, and posting them there.

ment it had been objected, that it would produce great confusion in the printing establishments if a portion of the paper had to be printed on stamped and the other portion on unstamped paper; and that the consequence of that confusion would be a loss to the proprietors of newspapers. To this objection Sir G. C. Lewis rejoined that, having made inquiry of the managers of papers which actually published a portion stamped and a portion unstamped, he found that no such confusion existed. "The principal periodical which publishes a portion of its impression stamped and the remainder unstamped is that publication so familiarly known to all the members of this House—I mean *Punch*. In the year 1854, 425,000 stamped copies of that periodical were published; and I understand that, out of a weekly circulation of about 40,000 copies, 8000 are published stamped, and 32,000 unstamped. I had an interview with the manager of that paper—(laughter)—not to make inquiry as to how his interesting publication is compiled, but to obtain some information as to the economical branch of the establishment. That gentleman told me that there was not the least difficulty with regard to the printing of the paper, and that the mixed nature of the circulation did not give rise to the slightest confusion, nor was there any loss to the proprietors in consequence of it; and he described the difficulty which had been represented to me to exist as perfectly nugatory. I made farther inquiry of Mr. Francis, of the *Athenæum*, a paper which is also printed partly stamped and partly unstamped, and I found that there was no practical difficulty or loss in conducting that paper; and although the demand for stamped copies was greatly affected by various circumstances—such as the absence from London in the summer of persons usually resident there—yet those temporary variations were easily adjusted, and neither confusion nor loss occurred." Similar evidence had been given by the proprietor of the *Illustrated London News*; so that this objection to the repeal of the compulsory stamp fell utterly to the ground.

Into the other portions of Sir G. C. Lewis's speech we need

not enter minutely. He proposed that the existing laws requiring publishers of newspapers to be bound in sureties, and also the rules respecting registration, should be retained, owing to the fact "that libellous matter published in a newspaper affecting any individual, exercises a much more detrimental effect than would be the case if such matter were published in a simple pamphlet." Referring to the proposal which had been made by some, that newspaper stamps should be abolished altogether, and a cheap uniform tariff for printed matter adopted, he said that the government would be willing to take this into consideration afterward. The law requiring sureties from newspapers, which Mr. Gladstone had proposed to repeal, was left on the statute-book till 1869, when it was repealed, chiefly owing to the exertions of Mr. Ayrton, who, after Mr. Milner Gibson joined the government, acted as president of the Association for the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge.

In the course of the debate following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech, Mr. Gladstone said that he was glad to hear that the government were disposed to give favorable consideration to a lower postal rate for printed matter, but that he objected to the retention of securities as a condition for postal facilities. Among the other more prominent speakers on the subject were Mr. Milner Gibson and Mr. Bright. The former, while agreeing with pleasure to the resolutions proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, joined with Mr. Gladstone in regretting that he had not added to his plan the proposal of a cheap rate of postage for all printed matter. It was, he said, a monstrous thing that such a paper as the *Times*, weighing, say six ounces, should for one penny have the privilege of continual postal transmission, while the smallest pamphlet could not be sent through the post for that sum. Mr. Bright, in a vigorous speech, strongly supported the resolutions. "I am quite satisfied," he said, "from years of attention to the subject, that there never was so large a measure involved in a small measure, so to speak, as is the case with regard to this proposition for making the Press free. I am willing to rest on the



verdict of the future, and I am quite convinced that five or six years will show that all the votes of Parliament for educational purposes have been as mere trifles compared with the vast results which will flow from this measure, because, while the existing papers retain all their powers of usefulness, it will call to their aid numbers of others not less useful; and while we continue to enjoy the advantage of having laid before us each morning a map of the events of the world, the same advantage will be extended to classes of society at present shut out from it." The opposition to the resolutions was comparatively unimportant, and they were agreed to without a division.

In his speech Mr. Bright quoted a passage which had appeared in the *Times* of the previous year. It ran as follows: "With all our talk about knowledge, about the achievements of science, about education, schools, churches, enlightenment, and Heaven knows what not, there is something positively ridiculous in taxing that intelligence which really constitutes the great medium of a civilized country. We make a great stir about teaching everybody to read, and the state—that is, the nation—pays a quarter of a million a year in teaching children to do little more than read. Then we proceed to tax the very first thing that everybody reads. In this way the newspapers pay for the education of the country, for they find their expenses aggravated and their circulation restricted by an impost about equal to the sum spent in educating the masses. But we have several times enlarged on the absurdity of a tax which, as it is a tax on news, is a tax on knowledge, and is thus a tax on light, a tax on education, a tax on truth, a tax on public opinion, a tax on good order and good government, a tax on society, a tax on the progress of human affairs, and on the working of human institutions." Having read this passage, Mr. Bright said that he was not quite sure that the *Times* might not to-morrow entirely deny it, or write in an opposite sense. His foreboding proved true. A leader written in that "slashing" style, which was of much more frequent occurrence in the *Times* then than now, appeared in the *Times* of March 20,



1855, commenting on Sir G. C. Lewis's resolutions. It characterized them as a measure for restricting the circulation of the *Times*, raising up an inferior and piratical Press, and sacrificing a revenue of £200,000 a year. Terrible fears of rivalry and plagiarism made the *Times* look on the resolutions with unmitigated disgust. "What the London papers have to expect is, that in the metropolis, and still more in the manufacturing districts, there will be published early in the day, and circulated by private hands, a cheap class of papers giving all the news which *we* believe to constitute our principal attraction, and to obtain which we spend immense sums of money. The Chancellor of the Exchequer is above this vulgar appetite for news. He has no relish for an event until it has been five years in the wood, and as many in the bottle. But we must beg to assure him that the people of England are actually impatient for news, and would rather it were not even a day old. So we can easily conceive that it will answer the purpose of enterprising gentlemen to republish our news in a cheap form by ten o'clock for the metropolitan circulation, and two and four o'clock for the provincial districts." How groundless were the fears of the *Times* that it and the great London papers would be ruined by unscrupulous competition, need not be dwelt on. Fortunately, its terrors were without influence in preventing the passing of the bill abolishing the compulsory stamp. On June 15, 1855, it became law. On June 6, 1855, a Treasury Order had been issued, admitting all printed matter to postage at the rate of four ounces a penny.

In illustration of the encouragement which the abolition of the compulsory stamp gave to the starting of new literary ventures, the case of the *Saturday Review* may be cited. Its first number was published on November 3, 1855, and the following extract from its opening address will prove of interest, and form a fitting conclusion to this section of our subject: "The immediate motive in coming before the public is furnished by the impetus given to periodical literature by the repeal of the Newspaper Stamp Act. The object of that

measure is to enable those who assume the responsibility of providing the public with accessible information or instruction to do so without the cumbrous and expensive machinery hitherto inseparable from a newspaper. What the recent act has done is, however, not so much to make news—commercially speaking—cheaper, as to remove the restrictions and difficulties heretofore incidental to the publication of matter in a newspaper form. The Press has, by the late change in the law, acquired freedom rather than cheapness, and of the benefits of the change the writers and proprietors of the *Saturday Review* desire to avail themselves.”

## THE PAPER DUTY.

We have now arrived at the third and by far the most difficult and complicated part of our subject—the repeal of the paper duty. Compared with it, the repeal of the advertisement and stamp duties was not so formidable. The amount of revenue raised by them was not very considerable; everybody admitted that they were attended by some grave disadvantages; and most people held that the advantages attached to them bore no proportion to the inconvenience which they caused. The paper duty, on the other hand, was the source of a large revenue, and it was favorably looked upon, as we shall afterward see, by some who might have been expected to be strongly opposed to it. Nevertheless, we may wonder, when we consider the strong phalanx of its opponents, that it should have continued to exist so long after the other two taxes on knowledge were repealed. The paper-makers (in the beginning of the struggle for repeal, at any rate) were almost to a man against it. Every grocer who wrapped up a pound of tea in a parcel felt its inconvenience, for of course his brown wrapping-paper paid duty. Newspaper proprietors paid yearly thousands of pounds on account of it. Promoters of literature for the people, such as Chambers, Knight, and Cassell, groaned under the burden which it imposed on them. Every writer of popular literature had his profits curtailed by it; every working-man

who wished to improve his mind by reading had his well-meant efforts "cribbed, cabined, and confined" by this impost upon the raw material of knowledge.

We shall first consider the paper duty as affecting publishers and authors. By those who wished to make it appear a trifling affair a most unjust and sophistical line of argument was adopted on this subject. They pointed to new copyright books, published at a high price, and triumphantly asked how much cheaper they would be if the duty were repealed. Macaulay's "History of England," the most popular book of the day, was a favorite text for their lucubrations. It would, said they, supposing the paper duty repealed, only drop from eighteen shillings to seventeen shillings and tenpence a volume—a difference not worth speaking about. This was very true, but nothing to the point. It was not on expensive books for the rich, but on cheap literature for the poor, that the tax fell heavily. On M'Culloch's "Commercial Dictionary," which sold at fifty shillings, the duty was only sevenpence. On fifty shillings' worth of *Chambers's Journal* it was over three shillings. Thus, we see, the duty was most felt by those on whom it should not have been imposed at all. The rich man, to whom a difference of two or three shillings in the price of a book was a matter of no consequence, was scarcely affected by the paper duty; the poor man, to whom the purchase of even a half-crown book was a considerable undertaking, had to pay a large percentage on its price for paper duty.

Charles Knight, who had bitter experience of the onerous nature of the duty, in his curious and interesting pamphlet, "The Struggles of a Book against Excessive Taxation," has shown how it hampered the publication of literature for the people, and what ruinous expense it frequently entailed on publishers. During twenty years of his life as a publisher he paid about £80,000 to authors for their labors, and £50,000 to the state for paper duty, in order to give to the public the benefit of the compositions of these authors. So that, as was scornfully said, before he could circulate £80,000 worth of

intellect and knowledge, he had to pay no less a toll than £50,000 to the state, and that in a country which was constantly proclaiming to the world the great desire it had for diffusing knowledge and promoting education among the people. One of Mr. Knight's greatest enterprises, the "Penny Cyclopædia," almost ruined him, owing to the tax on paper. In a letter to Mr. Milner Gibson, in 1853, he said: "During the last twenty years especially I have been laboring to produce books which should unite literary excellence with exceeding cheapness. I paid £40,000 for the copyright of the 'Penny Cyclopædia.' When the book was finished I had paid to the excise £16,500 upon the paper used in that work. But the actual duty paid was about doubled by the necessary increase of the manufacturer's price produced by the duty and by the increase of stock. That great national work would only have paid its expenses had there been no paper duty at all. But the copyright of that cyclopædia remains my property, and I am about to produce an improved cyclopædia. If I produce an expensive edition which would remunerate me by a sale of 2000 at twenty pounds per copy, the paper will cost about £5000, of which the actual duty will be about £1000. But if I rely upon a very large demand, and make my estimates upon a sale of 20,000 at six pounds per copy, the paper will cost £30,000, of which the duty will be £6000. If I produce a dear book for the few, the state will tax me £1000; if a cheap book for the many, I shall be taxed £6000." Charles Knight's experience of the burdensome nature of the paper duty, and how it hindered the circulation of cheap literature, was no unique one. Robert Chambers, speaking at a public dinner held in Edinburgh in 1849, said: "'The Miscellany of Tracts,' published by our firm, was closed as non-remunerative with a steady sale of 80,000; while it was calculated that the work, up to the end of last year, had paid £6220 of duty. Now, had not this money been taken by the government, we might have been advised to continue the work. Thus was a business, which distributed £18,000 a year in the employment



of labor and the profits of retail trade—thus was an organ of intelligence and morality for the people of this country closed by the government as effectually as if they had sent the police to break the presses. To illustrate this matter farther: We have since set agoing a similar work, but at three half-pence a sheet, and on a somewhat more ambitious principle as to the grade of subjects and the style of treatment. Driven from the penny field by the paper duty, we try that of three half-pence. But of this series of sheets the sale is under one-half that of the former. The higher price appears to be the chief cause why the sale is thus restricted. The work, we trust, does a great deal of good—all pure and well-meant literature must do so. As the profit, however, is but small, this work may, perhaps, have to be given up also.” The immense pressure of the paper duty on large publishers is well shown by the fact, that during the twenty years before its abolition Messrs. Chambers paid on account of it no less a sum than £160,000; while in 1858 there was paid £7000 for Cassell’s “Illustrated Family Paper” alone.

It is plain enough that, since publishers paid such immense sums for paper duty, they were unable to remunerate authors to anything like the extent they might otherwise have done. Hence arose the difficulty of getting writers of first-class merit to employ themselves in the production of literature for the people; and hence also an evil effect of the paper duty pointed out by Charles Knight, in 1850, in a pamphlet entitled “The Case of Authors as regards the Paper Duty.” “Many mischievous productions,” he says, “exist with the paper duty, while many useful ones are annihilated. Incurring no expense of authorship, or giving a very low price for the commonest drudgery, they pay their expenses or afford a profit with a very small circulation. Many of them are mere printers’ jobs, carried on without any of the ordinary expenses of a regular printing-office—employing no skilled compositors or intelligent readers—printed upon the very worst paper, with worn-out type. Many of the penny sheets, whose evil influence is



so justly deplored, continue to be sold throughout the country, and are attractive from their very ignorance and vulgarity; but half a dozen of such publications may not equal the number distributed of an honest and improving journal. Of the higher cheap periodical works, and of the better class of cheap original books, the titles are comparatively few. But with a liberal payment for the best authorship; with good paper; with careful printing, which also involves skilled labor; with the heavy cost of stereotyping to meet a continuous demand, while the trashy publications are essentially ephemeral, they must each sell very largely to be remunerative. This condition of their success renders it necessary to measure the continued operation of the paper duty upon each of them by thousands of pounds, instead of by hundreds, or fractions of hundreds, as in the other class of low-priced works. If the paper duty were a direct tax upon books in the form of a paper duty stamp—although such a mode of taxation would be far less injurious to literature than the present impost—it would be annihilated, without any sympathy with the Exchequer, by the force of public opinion. The nation would not endure a direct tax, heavy in the exact proportion in which the work of public instruction was carried on most extensively and most beneficially."

With one other grievance—not, perhaps, so obvious at first sight as the others—we shall end our list of objections to the paper duty as affecting publishers and authors. All who have experience in such matters are aware that frequently the probable success of a book is an extremely difficult matter to calculate, and that the acutest publishers and the most far-sighted authors may often blunder regarding it. Now, supposing that an extensive sale of a book was anticipated, and in consequence a large impression of it printed—of which, however, only half was disposed of—the publisher got no drawback on the half that remained unsold. He was left with a large quantity of printed matter, for which he had paid duty, to dispose of as best he could to those steady patrons of literature, the trunk-makers.

It may easily be imagined that the complaints of the paper-makers against the duty were loud and deep. Not only did it retard the extension of their trade, but through its instrumentality they were subjected to fiscal restrictions of the most vexatious and harassing kind. The following are, in a compendious form, the excise regulations with reference to the manufacturer of paper :

1. He must enter his premises in the excise-books before he begins to prepare any materials for his manufacture, or pay £200.

2. He must number every ream, and every machine, vat, or press on his premises, or pay £200.

3. He must admit the exciseman into his mill at any time of the day or night, or pay £200.

4. He must wrap, separately, every ream or half-ream, and mark all particulars upon the label, or pay £10.

5. He must keep separate, for six hours, all paper once weighed, unless it be sooner re-weighed, or forfeit £50.

6. He must keep sufficient scales and weights, and allow the officers of excise to use them, or forfeit £100 ; and if he employ for his own purposes the more accurate weighing-machine used in other government departments, he is compelled to keep the old beam for the use of the exciseman.

7. He must help the exciseman to do his work, or forfeit £200.

9. He must abstain from sending out any paper not tied up in wrappers perfectly labelled, or forfeit £20.

10. He must give notice before he moves his paper from one place to another, or pay £20.

11. He must abstain from opening a stationer's shop within a mile of his mill, or forfeit £200.

In spite of the heavy penalties for the infringement of the law thus hanging over their heads, it is said that some of the paper-makers were able to come to commodious arrangements with the excisemen, by means of which a considerable proportion of the duty was remitted.

It appears strange that some of the paper-makers should have been strongly opposed to the repeal of the duty, but such is the case. Mr. Charles Cowan, M.P., in one of his many excellent speeches against the duty, said that he had been repeatedly implored by his brethren of the trade, both in Scotland and in England, but especially in England, to cease his efforts for the abolition of the duty, in order that such a calamity as that of more persons coming into the trade might be averted. Many, however, of the largest manufacturers in England were above regarding competition with such a craven fear. Among these deserves to be mentioned Alderman Baldwin, of Birmingham, a man who had risen from the ranks to the position of a manufacturer paying over £9000 per annum of duty, and who, sometimes by very forcible letters in the newspapers, sometimes by addressing public meetings, and sometimes by forming a member of deputations to the government, did all in his power to promote the repeal.

The third class to which the paper duty was burdensome was grocers and others, who used a large number of paper bags, etc., and manufacturers who employed a large quantity of wrapping-paper. It must be remembered that the duty of three half-pence a pound was the same on the finest letter-paper and on the coarsest sheets, so that in some cases it actually amounted to a tax of 200 per cent. Some large dealers paid as much as £2000 a year for paper, of which £500 or more was duty. Mr. T. B. Crompton, in a pamphlet published in 1850, says: "There are many respectable grocers doing a considerable business, whose expenses for packing-paper are large; indeed, there are many who use paper to such an extent that the duty thereon is fully equal to their shop-rents. A grocer in an ordinary business pays £100 a year for paper to pack up his sugars, soaps, teas, etc. Now, the grocer either pays this out of his profits, or he does not. If he does, this industrious, hard-working man is forced to give up a large portion of his earnings to meet the wants of his country, when he is called on, in every other way, to pay his full share of

the ordinary taxation. If he does not, how, then, is the grocer re-imbursed? Most assuredly by an increased price on his goods, or by selling an inferior article at a higher price than its real value; and then on whom does this burden fall? Unquestionably on the working-classes principally, who are the largest consumers of the goods requiring so much paper for their packing; for, be it observed, that the man in good circumstances who orders his fifty pounds of sugar at once pays much less for the paper in which it is wrapped than the poor laborer does who buys his fifty pounds of sugar at fifty different times. Either way, this heavy duty is quite indefensible, and ought to be totally abolished. I know parties who have been paying these heavy sums for many years, and who had been doing so in complete ignorance of the sum which this unjust law wrested from them, and who, when made aware of the real facts of the case, have expressed their honest and vehement indignation that such things should have existed so long, and, above all, that such should still be maintained by the government of this country. In fact, I might pile up a vast array of cases illustrative of this injustice, such as those of the manufacturers of Birmingham, Sheffield, etc., who use such vast quantities of coarse papers; and especially worthy of notice is the case of the button-makers, who, when using the boards from which they make their moulds, of necessity produce a vast quantity of waste, in many instances nearly one-half, but who, of course, pay duty on the whole, thus making the duty on what they use equal to thirty pounds per ton, instead of the fifteen pounds which the law is said to exact, thus greatly enhancing the cost of the materials from which their goods are produced. The same remark applies to loom-weavers, an illustration of which is found in the case of Mr. R. Kerr, of Paisley, who, intending to compete in the article of shawl manufacture in the Exhibition of 1851, applied to the Lords of the Treasury for a drawback of the excise duty on the card-boards he would use in the preparation of his designs. The cost of the boards, duty included (but exclusive of preparation), would



be £270, of which the duty amounted to £92 15s., an expense from which his foreign competitors were entirely exempt. His application was refused."

Such is a brief outline of the main grievances imposed by the paper duty on certain classes. Of course many more might be added. We now come to the story of the efforts made for its repeal.

The first occasion on which Mr. Milner Gibson brought the subject before Parliament was on April 19, 1850. Sir Charles Wood, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, said: "His right honorable friend had quoted the opinion of the Excise Commissioners as to the operation of the duty on paper, but his right honorable friend would remember that the Commission expressed a much stronger opinion as to the propriety of taking the duty off bricks; and how much soever he (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) might be disposed, if circumstances permitted, to promote the dissemination of knowledge and the improvement of the mind, by the removal of the paper duty, he thought the health of the people was a matter of prior importance, and that a tax which operated to its prejudice had the stronger claims upon their consideration." It may be mentioned that in the division which followed Mr. Disraeli voted in the minority which supported Mr. Milner Gibson. This vote he reversed two years afterward, and never again repeated.

On April 22, 1852, Mr. Milner Gibson returned to the charge. Mr. Disraeli, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, said: "I have no wish to contest the accuracy of the view which the right honorable gentleman has taken with respect to the effect of the excise duties on paper upon the manufacture of that article. The duty on paper, however, is so large in amount, that every one, I think, must hesitate before he gives a vote which would decrease this portion of the revenue." The debate having been adjourned to May 12, Mr. Gladstone declared that, as regarded the duty on paper, he should be exceedingly glad when the time came that it could be repealed.

By the time Mr. Milner Gibson again brought the subject



before Parliament, on April 14, 1853, Mr. Gladstone was himself Chancellor of the Exchequer. Commenting on Mr. Milner Gibson's motion, he said: "With respect to the paper duty, I fully admit that, large as is the revenue derived from that source, I should be delighted if it could be dispensed with. I grant that it is a duty which it is desirable to repeal; and I shall be as happy as the right honorable gentleman himself can be when the time arrives when we shall be able to find a substitute for that duty, or to dispense with it."

In 1857 Mr. Milner Gibson was precluded by the loss of his seat from bringing forward his resolution. On February 4 of that year, however, he introduced a deputation to Sir G. C. Lewis. Their arguments do not seem to have had much effect on him, for in bringing forward his Budget on the 13th he showed himself less inclined to repeal the paper duty than any of his predecessors. He quoted as "full of wisdom, and a most useful practical guide in the arrangement of a system of taxation," the following opinion of Arthur Young: "The mere circumstance of taxes being very numerous, in order to raise a given sum, is a considerable step toward equality in the burden falling on the people; if I were to define a good system of taxation, it should be that of bearing lightly on an infinite number of points, heavily on none. In other words, that simplicity in taxation is the greatest additional weight that can be given to taxes, and ought in every country to be most sedulously avoided." For this expression of opinion Sir G. C. Lewis was severely taken to task by those in favor of the repeal of the paper duty, who maintained that every indirect tax takes at least twice as much from the payer as it gives to the receiver.

In 1858 Mr. Milner Gibson's efforts were at length partially successful. On June 21 of that year he moved: "1. That it is the opinion of this House that the maintenance of the excise on paper as a permanent source of revenue would be impolitic. 2. That such financial arrangements ought to be made as will enable Parliament to dispense with that tax." Mr. Disraeli, at that time Chancellor of the Exchequer, said: "He looked on

the tax on paper as one of those taxes which, when a favorable opportunity arose, he should be glad to see erased from our fiscal system; as well in a commercial as in a moral, literary, and educational point of view, he should be glad if he could feel it his duty to propose the remission of that tax. These were the opinions he had always expressed—of course with due reference to the position of the minister, and with due regard to the condition of the public treasury. . . . There was a portion of the resolution to which he would willingly make no objection. Although he did not see the use of pressing such a declaration of opinion upon the House, he agreed with the right honorable gentleman, ‘that the maintenance of the excise on paper as a permanent source of revenue would be impolitic.’ He could not agree with him ‘that such financial arrangements ought to be made as will enable Parliament to dispense with that tax.’ He admitted that the regulations with regard to paper were open to objection; and he was not prepared to say that the tax on paper itself was not one which required, if not immediate, early consideration.” Lord John Russell spoke in the same strain, observing that, the duty on paper being an excise duty, the inconvenience and vexation connected with it were as much felt as the pecuniary burden, and therefore it ought not to be kept up permanently. They had, he said, got rid of several duties of excise, and, after their abolition, the revenue was found to be as large as before. The debate was concluded by Mr. Milner Gibson withdrawing the second part of his resolution, and the first part was then agreed to without a division.\*

This triumph caused the two associations mentioned at the beginning of this chapter to redouble their efforts. The Association for the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge showed great energy, and the “London Committee for Obtaining the Repeal

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\* For the above historical summary I am mainly indebted to a pamphlet entitled “The Tax upon Paper: The Case Stated for its Immediate Repeal,” published in 1858 by the Newspaper Press Association.

of the Duty on Advertisements"—now designated "The Newspaper and Periodical Press Association for Obtaining the Repeal of the Paper Duty"—was equally strenuous. It was a very large and influential body; its list of vice-presidents comprising more than a hundred members of Parliament, and its committee containing some of the leading men connected with the London Press. Branch Press Associations were formed in Edinburgh for Scotland (Walter Buchanan, Esq., M.P., president; William Chambers, chairman of committee); and in Dublin for Ireland (Right Hon. J. D. Fitzgerald, M.P., president; Dr. John Gray, chairman of committee), and proved themselves as active and zealous in the cause as the parent association in London. All were determined that the Parliamentary resolution in favor of repeal should not be forgotten. By means of public meetings, pamphlets and leaflets, every effort was made to interest the public mind in the subject, and to strengthen the feeling in favor of repeal.

Acting on the sound principle, 'strike the iron while it is hot,' a very large and influential deputation waited on Lord Derby, the Prime-minister, on February 11, 1859, to urge upon the government the expediency and justice of abolishing the paper duties. The deputation consisted of about two hundred noblemen and gentlemen, including a large number of members of Parliament, many representatives of the London Press, and members of the Irish and Scottish branches of the Newspaper Press Association. Mr. Milner Gibson, who introduced the deputation, said that it was felt that, Parliament having condemned the paper duty as a source of revenue, its doom was sealed; and considerable inactivity having been thereby caused in all commercial operations connected with paper, it was rendered a matter of the most urgent necessity that the government should lose no time in bringing the question to a settlement. Every person felt that, Parliament having decided against raising money by this mode of taxation, the sooner the duty was repealed the better, and all uncertainty in the matter put an end to.

Memorials were then read by Mr. C. D. Collet, from the Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes upon Knowledge; and by Mr. Vizetelly, from the Newspaper Press Association. The latter especially contained many interesting particulars. The paper duty, it was said, had been condemned by every authority in the country which had a right to speak on the subject—by the *Times*, by those journals which represented the most accomplished thought, and by those which represented the largest classes; by those which spoke for literature and science, and by that one (*Punch*) which represented the wit of the country. The extent to which the duty on paper restricted its consumption was shown by the fact, that while in England the annual amount of paper consumed was four pounds and three-quarters per head to each person, in the United States it was thirteen pounds and a half. Since the reduction of the duty from threepence to three half-pence per pound, in the year 1836 to 1851, the annual circulation of newspapers in the United Kingdom rose from 39,000,000 to 95,000,000; and yet, even at this greatly increased rate, it was less than one-fifth of the annual newspaper circulation of the United States, which had a smaller population. The document concluded by exhorting the Government to repeal a tax which, if it yielded to the Treasury £1,119,000 in hard cash, unquestionably did far more to cut off the sources whence taxation was derived, besides fettering the energies of the people.

Among the more prominent speakers of the deputation were Mr. John Cassell, Mr. John Francis, and Mr. William Chambers. Mr. Cassell stated that from the establishment with which he was connected about thirty millions of copies of cheap literature were issued, paying a tax to the state exceeding £10,000 per annum. Mr. Francis, alluding to the fact that, of the difficulties which the supporters of the movement had to contend with, one of the most formidable was the impression, that if the duty were repealed the country would be flooded with a profane and scurrilous literature, said he had taken the trouble to collect a number of journals, published and circu-



lated in the lower districts of the metropolis, into which such matter, if it had existence, would be likely to find its way; but he found that there was not in any of them a line which a lady need fear to read. Mr. Chambers dwelt on the extreme severity with which the duty fell on the cheaper class of newspapers, periodicals, and books, and on the increased excellence of popular literature which the repeal of the duty could not fail to bring about.

The reception which the deputation met with from the Earl of Derby was not a particularly encouraging one. He admitted the objectionable nature of the duty, both on the grounds urged by the deputation and because it stood very much in the way of improvement in the process of manufacture. But he held out no hope of its repeal. "I shall," he said, "be fully as much surprised as I shall be gratified, if I find it in the power of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take off a duty which supplies over a million of pounds to the revenue."

Better days were at hand. Before the close of 1859 the Derby ministry was replaced by that of Lord Palmerston. In bringing forward his Budget, on February 10, 1860, Mr. Gladstone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, boldly included in it the repeal of the paper duty. Having gone over some of the objections to the duty—the fact that it had been unanimously condemned by Parliament, the inequality of its operation on different kinds of paper, the extent to which it hampered the spread of literature—he went on to say: "It has two characteristics, to which I call the special attention of the committee. In the first place, the material with which it deals is a material of almost boundless scope. Everything that is fibrous may in one manner or another be said to serve the purpose of making paper. . . . Really and seriously, whatever has fibre could with skill and enterprise in all probability be made available for the purpose of manufacturing paper, were it not for the obstructions of the excise department. I have got here a list of sixty-nine trades in which paper is largely used, including the business of anatomical machinists, boot and shoe makers, cap-



makers—paper being used for the peaks of caps instead of varnished leather—comb-makers, doll-makers, optical instrument-makers, looking-glass-makers. These trades, with several others, make use of paper, and a person asked for information on the subject said, ‘I could make bee-hives of paper, and panels of doors, and, above all, I look forward to build a carriage with paper, when the duty is off.’ Another manufacturer says: ‘Is it just or proper to tax ingenious inventions, when we see India-rubber being made into strong and durable combs and other articles?’ I think there is great force in that. Again, he says that ‘paper pipes are being prepared with bitumen, and capable of standing the pressure of 300 lbs. of water.’ But the great advantage that will arise from this particular change, in the opinion of the government, is this—that it will promote a diffused demand for rural labor. It will not merely stimulate the process of making paper in the great centres of industry, but it will promote the manufacture in all parts of the country where there are streams of water, and villages, and good and pure air. . . . The paper duty has excluded all small manufacturers, and has concentrated the trade in the hands of the large manufacturers. The village mills have consequently been shut up, and I want to see them spring up again. . . . The duty on paper is not only an invidious duty—for every other duty of the same class is abolished—but the law is rapidly becoming untenable. The officers of the Inland Revenue are completely agreed with those who agitate for the repeal of the tax. I asked the agitators for the repeal of the duty to state the reasons for its abolition in a few short propositions. They accordingly sent me fifteen arguments for its repeal. I sent these arguments to the Board of Inland Revenue, and they said two were propositions referring to the principles of political economy, and it was not for them to answer them; but, with regard to the other thirteen arguments, they agreed in opinion with the agitators for the abolition of the duty. To maintain the duty beyond a certain time is impossible, because such difficulty arises in deciding what is, and what is not, pa-

per. . . . The paper duty must fall sooner or later—it must follow the fate of the newspaper stamp, and we think it should fall sooner rather than later. What we propose is, that the duty shall be abolished from the 1st of July, with a drawback on stock in possession on that day.”

Mr. Gladstone's proposal to repeal the duty was hailed with not a little excitement throughout the land. By the Press almost universally it was received with gratitude and pleasure. “When we are paying over a million a year for the furtherance of education,” said the *Times* in its leader on the Budget, “it seems little else than ridiculous to extract more than that sum from the sale of cheap literature.” The *Times*, however, sneered at Mr. Gladstone's anticipations of the great variety of uses to which paper would be applied, and of the increased number of paper-mills. “We admire Mr. Gladstone's enthusiasm. We have no objection to his making coaches, and pipes, and dolls, and teapots, and artificial arms, as he professes that he and his friends are about to do, out of paper. We smile indulgently at his romantic and Arcadian scheme of rearing paper-mills in every rural valley, whither the villagers will flock to make the paper of their village journal, and linger as they return in the evening to watch the angler casting his fly over the mill-tail.” As regards, however, at least the former part of these anticipations, the event has proved Mr. Gladstone more nearly correct than his critic.

In the midst of the general rejoicing at the promised removal of the paper duty which prevailed among publishers of cheap literature (and, indeed, so far as we have been able to discover, among publishers of all descriptions), Mr. Henry G. Bohn, to the surprise of many, made his voice heard in favor of the tax. In two letters to the *Morning Advertiser* (afterward republished in pamphlet form) he laid his arguments against the repeal before the public. It may at first sight seem strange that Mr. Bohn, whose “Libraries” are celebrated wherever the English language is spoken, should have objected to obtaining the opportunity of buying his paper three half-pence per pound

cheaper. The reason, however, is not far to seek. After sundry rather vague arguments, which we need not go over, we come, at the end of his second letter, to the secret of his opposition. He declares that, if the paper duty be repealed, "I shall lose the drawback, which, as a considerable shipper of books, yields me several hundreds per annum. At this very moment I hold half a million of volumes in stock which are equitably entitled to it, but no doubt will be disallowed. Now, this drawback gives great encouragement to the foreign consignment, and has hitherto placed my numerous popular volumes in every literary part of the globe, in direct and often successful competition with our Transatlantic friends, who are allowed to traffic with the British colonies on very easy terms. The three half-pence per volume (taking the average weight of my Library volumes at a pound) is often the only profit; and were it not for this, my own export trade, and that of many other publishers, would be very much injured." *Hinc illæ lachrymæ.* Mr. Bohn's reason for opposing the repeal was, no doubt, a very good one so far as he himself was concerned, but it was not one with which he could expect the public to have any very deep sympathy.

To the importance of the occasion, and to the need for strengthening the hands of the government, both the associations advocating the repeal of the paper duty were fully alive. Soon after Mr. Gladstone's Budget speech they issued papers detailing the facts of the case, and recapitulating some of the chief arguments for repeal. Public meetings were also held in London and elsewhere, at some of which the opponents of repeal (Mr. Bohn, for instance) were put down very roughly. To obviate the threatened opposition to the second reading of the bill in the House of Commons, it was desirable that the pressure of outside opinion should be brought to bear as clearly as possible on the members of Parliament, and no means by which this might be done were neglected. In this connection we may mention an important paper, which appeared in the beginning of March, and to which the advocates for repeal pointed with

justifiable exultation. This was a report from the Commissioners of Inland Revenue, stating it as their deliberate opinion that the paper duty was rapidly becoming wholly untenable, owing to the great and increasing embarrassments involved in the collecting of the tax.

That the efforts of the agitators for repeal were not uncalled for appeared when, on March 12, 1860, the Bill for the Abolition of the Paper Duty came to be read a second time. Sir W. Miles, a worthy protectionist baronet, rose and moved that it should be read a second time that day six months. In a pretty long speech (which was more an outcry against the additional penny which Mr. Gladstone proposed to add to the income-tax in order to compensate for the repeal of the paper duty, than a defence of the paper duty), he went over some of the hackneyed arguments in favor of the duty, quoting certain "facts" and certain "inferences" from Mr. Bohn's pamphlet, with sublime indifference to the truth that the "facts" had been shown to be questionable, and the "inferences" far from proving what it was desired to prove. Sir William Miles's motion was supported by Mr. B. Stanhope, in a speech the quality of which may be better estimated by the following extract than by any description: "He went on to say that it was idle to contend that the existing duty on paper threw any obstacle in the way of the circulation of literature; that it was the cant of the day to call it a tax on knowledge; for the coarser descriptions of paper, on which the great bulk of the duty was levied, were employed chiefly in the making up of parcels, and not devoted to the purposes of printing. This being the case, he could not understand how it could be urged that the repeal of the duty would tend to the spread of literature among the lower classes." The matter does not seem very difficult to understand. The duty was the very cause which hindered a larger proportion of paper being used for the production of books and periodicals for the lower classes.

Mr. B. Stanhope's speech was far surpassed in absurdity by Lord Robert Cecil's (now Lord Salisbury), part of which will



bear quoting, as perhaps the most amusing portion of a long and tedious debate. "Honorable members," said he, "had talked of the hardship of taxing books of education, and what great folly it was to take out of the pockets of the people with one hand what the state put in with the other. This, however, was merely a matter of detail, which might be regulated by exempting from paper duty books which were sanctioned by the Committee of Education, in the same way that Bibles were now exempted. Therefore, if they excepted dear books and books of education, the tax upon knowledge limited itself to very cheap books and very cheap newspapers—to books like 'Cassell's Illustrated Bible' and the penny papers. Now, he was a little inclined to doubt whether the tax upon the penny papers could be said to be, in any proper sense of the word, a tax on knowledge. (Hear, hear.) Could it be maintained that a person of any education could learn anything from a penny paper? (Hear, hear.) It might be said people might learn what had been said in Parliament. Well, would that contribute much to their education? (Laughter and "Hear, hear.") They might read the foreign intelligence, of which many would understand very little, and they might see the opinions of the editor of the paper. No doubt, all this was interesting to members of that House, but it did not answer any true idea of education, or carry any real instruction or true training to the mind. (Cheers.) It was a prostitution of real education to talk of this tax upon the penny papers as a tax upon knowledge." There are few even of the boldest members of the House of Commons who would dare now to talk of the penny Press in the strain which was apparently so well received in 1860.

The objections to the repeal advanced by various speakers were ably dealt with by Mr. Milner Gibson, who concisely summed up the various arguments against the duty. He dwelt on its evil influences on large consumers of wrapping-paper, pointing out how, with regard to exports, it acted as an export duty on several kinds of manufactures, inasmuch as the duty was paid on the paper boxes in which these goods were sent abroad,



and formed a considerable addition to the value of the article which the boxes contained. Viewing it as a tax on knowledge, he showed, as had repeatedly been done before, that to mention how small a portion of the price of such a book as Macaulay's "History of England" the duty was, was really no argument in favor of its retention. Having referred to its severe pressure on penny papers, he went on to discuss its influence on those publications of a religious and philanthropic character, the diffusion of which throughout the country ought to be promoted as widely as possible. In this connection he mentioned that one of the largest of those societies (the Religious Tract Society, we presume) paid in the shape of duty on paper, and in charges for printing, binding, and packing, a sum at least equal to the annual subscriptions which it received, so that nearly the whole of its income went into the coffers of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. For the *Leisure Hour* and the *Sunday at Home* the duty amounted to £3000 per annum.

The main features of the following part of the debate were a hot attack on the income-tax by Mr. Horsman, and a reply to some of the previous speakers by Mr. Gladstone, who, in the course of his speech, pointed out that, notwithstanding the cheapness of all other manufactured goods, for the best class of books England was still the dearest country in the world. "Take," he said, "the Railway Library of England and compare it with the Railway Library of France. It is most unworthy of England, who prides herself on pre-eminence in manufacture." On a division being taken the numbers were: for the second reading, 245; against, 192; majority for the government—53. We believe we are safe in saying, that the minority rather represented the feeling against the additional penny of income-tax than any wide-spread desire to retain the paper duty.

The Press, with but very few exceptions, regarded with satisfaction the majority in favor of the bill. "After a debate of unusual length," said the *Times*, "the House of Commons has taken a very just and natural view of the matter, and con-

demned, by a majority of fifty-three, the absurdity of leaving paper the only taxed necessary of civilized life. . . . Sir W. Miles and his supporters talk glibly of the paper duty being only sixpence on two volumes of Macaulay, or a half-penny on the *Cornhill Magazine*; but all writers are not so successful as Macaulay and Thackeray, and many a meritorious writer and enterprising publisher would be only too happy to retain for himself the penny a volume which he pays to the Treasury." The *Daily Telegraph*, with a force of expression now rare in journalism, described the opposition to the bill as "a hornpipe danced chiefly by Miles, Cecil, and Horsman—by a dotard, a booby, and a renegade." "We may say this of that special provision of the government, which was on Monday under debate," said the *Morning Star*, "and we say it advisedly, there has been no specific project of fiscal reform within the last fifteen years that has been so cordially adopted and so perseveringly promoted by the working-classes as the abolition of the paper duty. . . . For this reason they have given constant and earnest attention, for ten years past, to the labors of the Association for the Abolition of the Taxes on Knowledge. The names of its chairman and secretary are equally familiar and honored in citizen homes all over the country. And in every workshop, from Aberdeen to Southampton, when the news of Monday night's division was received, the names of Gladstone and Milner Gibson were coupled in a benediction of which men of genius and statesmanship may worthily be proud." The *Standard*, true to its Conservative colors, while acknowledging that it would profit largely by the repeal of the duty, refused to accept the boon in a spirit of gratitude. "We should," it said, "be most willing to be relieved of the burden, but not at this time. We have managed to succeed, and can manage to succeed, even with the impost still upon us."

In the mean time, while the majority of the Press and the public were rejoicing over the anticipated abolition of the obnoxious duty, a great cry rose up from the paper-makers that it would ruin them. The Emperor of the French, it was said,

was to double the export duty on rags. If the import duty on paper was repealed, how were they to compete with the foreign manufacturers? All over the Continent, said they, rags are cheaper than here; and since their export is forbidden, foreigners can make and supply paper cheaper than we can. If France taxes her rags we ought to tax her paper. It is all very well to talk about free-trade and anti-protectionist principles, but we are not to be ruined for the sake of fine names. If we are called upon to meet the world's market in the manufactured article, we must have equal access to a common source for the raw material of our manufacture.

It must not be supposed that the paper-makers who held these views were few and unimportant, or that their influence was limited. Some of the largest paper-makers in England shared them; and managed, in some measure at least, to induce part of the Press to regard them with favor. Mr. Wrigley, of Bury, Lancashire, in two able letters to the *Times*, enforced them; and the *Times*, in several leading articles, agreed with all his main positions. Manifestoes were issued by associations of paper-makers in England, Scotland, and Ireland, saying, that so far from crying for protection, they would be but too happy and too anxious to go forth and compete with all the world. All they wanted was fair-play. Let the excise duty of three half-pence a pound on English and foreign paper be abolished by all means, but retain the import duty of one penny a pound on foreign paper, until Continental governments see the wisdom of abolishing the export duty on rags. "Hitherto," concluded the manifesto of the Scotch paper-makers, "the government have insisted on the co-operation of the paper-makers in raising a revenue for British purposes of above a million a year, and now, this having been abandoned, paper-makers are all of a sudden branded as monopolists; while the government, giving them no thanks or consideration for their long services, threatens, by its rash measures, adopted without inquiry, to place them in this distressing dilemma—either to remain in Britain, nominally British subjects, but crushed down

by the taxation of the Emperor of the French, or, becoming exiles from their native country, to settle in France, in order to carry on their trade profitably in future, and there manufacture, from untaxed rags, paper for the supply of their customers in the London market."

In reply to such touching effusions as these (which have, happily, been altogether refuted by the process of events), it was said that, in the first place, they were totally opposed to genuine free-trade principles; and, in the second place, that the British manufacturer was not dependent upon the supply of rags he got from France, nor, indeed, upon rags at all, to so great an extent as was said, since many other materials were capable of being used in paper-making, and doubtless would be extensively employed, if the paper duty were repealed. "Granting," wrote Mr. Moy Thomas, in an interesting letter to the *Morning Star*, the great organ of the free-traders, "all that the paper-makers prophesy, it is high time that we make up our minds that on no pretence can liberty to buy in any market be taken away from the people. If it is true that a particular industry is liable at any moment to be utterly destroyed for want of a protective duty of one penny a pound, men who embark in such a business, without an extra profit to balance the risk, must do so at their own cost. . . . A great branch of British industry, existing by no other means than the vigilance of Custom-house officers in keeping our neighbors out of our own market, is a thing which I hope few Englishmen would like to see."

Whether other materials than rags could be employed in the manufacture of good paper was a question which gave rise to much dispute. The *Times* constantly affirmed that, while it was quite possible that paper of some kind might be made from other materials, it would be paper of such a quality that the *Times* could not be printed on it. To this it was replied (and, as the event has proved, with truth), that even were this the case, such large quantities of paper would soon be manufactured either from other materials wholly, or from rags mixed



with other materials, that paper made purely from rags would be, comparatively speaking, so little in demand that its price would soon fall. We venture to assert that *no* newspaper (the *Times* itself not excepted) is now printed upon paper that does not contain a large quantity of Esparto grass in its composition. The cheaper class of newspapers—that is, those sold at one penny or under—are printed on paper containing a very large quantity of low-class raw material—mechanically-ground wood-pulp and clay—the other component parts being mainly Esparto grass, occasionally a little straw, and occasionally a little (but a very little) rag material.\*

When, on April 21, it was proposed that the House go into committee on the bill, an important motion was made by Mr. Bovill, to the effect that it was just and expedient that a drawback should be allowed to printers and publishers of the duty paid upon their stock of paper purchased and printed after the passing of the bill, and remaining in sheets unbound at the time the duty was to cease—that is, on August 15. In speaking in favor of his motion he pointed to the excessive stagnation of the printing trade which was sure to intervene between the passing of the bill and the time at which the duty was to cease. It was not the publishers so much as the printers whom he commiserated. The publishers would sustain almost no loss, for they could keep back the publishing of their books for four

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\* About 25 per cent. of the paper manufactured in this country is made from pure rags for fine writing, tissue, and superior printing and drawing papers; 25 per cent. from coarse rags, rope, etc., for the kinds of paper known as "brown casing" and "small hands;" and 50 per cent. from Esparto grass alone, or blended with rags, wood-pulp, etc. Nothing could better illustrate the rapid progress made in paper-making since the repeal of the duty than the fact that, in 1860, Mr. Thomas Routledge (now managing director of the Ford Works, Sunderland) was the only paper-maker using Esparto grass. Now 200,000 tons of it are imported annually. Of late years Mr. Routledge, who was mainly instrumental in the introduction of Esparto grass, has experimented largely in the manufacture of paper from bamboo—a raw material of which probably much use will be made by paper-makers in the future.



months without any material damage; but the printing trade would be quite paralyzed, and thousands of meritorious workmen thrown out of employment and deprived of the means of earning their bread. Mr. Adam Black, the eminent Edinburgh publisher, stated that he agreed with Mr. Bovill in this observation. The question of the drawback affected the printers only. As a publisher he should not care for it. If a publisher had a book coming out in a month or two he would probably defer it till after the 15th of August. The effect of the delay would be to throw printers and compositors, for a time, out of work. If the House could avert this evil, he thought it should do so. When, however, Mr. Gladstone stated that though, no doubt, the repeal of the duty would be attended with some inconveniences of the kind the previous speakers had referred to, it was utterly impossible for him to agree to Mr. Bovill's motion, it was negatived without a division.

The bill passed through committee with tolerable facility, and, on May 9, came up for its third reading. It must have been an anxious night for those opposed to the duty. The panic among the paper-makers had been partially successful in diffusing itself through the country; factious opponents eagerly seized hold of the occasion which the proposed repeal afforded of annoying the government; political alarmists shook their heads dolefully over the threatened loss of over a million of revenue. In a cautious and conciliatory speech Sir Stafford Northcote argued in favor of his motion, "That the present state of the finances of the country renders it undesirable to proceed farther with the repeal of the excise duty on paper." His argument was based solely on financial grounds, for he quite admitted that the repeal of the duty was highly desirable, provided it could be accomplished without serious inconvenience. The moderate tone of Sir Stafford Northcote's speech was not followed by some of his supporters. Mr. E. Ball declared that, having made extensive inquiries into the subject, he had not met with a single individual connected with the manufacture of paper who had not declared that, if

the proposal of the government were carried out, it would almost ruin all engaged in the trade. Mr. Disraeli also distinguished himself by delivering a furious tirade against the repeal of the duty at this time. "Now," he concluded, "while there is still an opportunity of at least mitigating our previous folly by some prudential movement, how can you reconcile it to yourselves to sacrifice, in the present financial condition of the country, a large branch of revenue, which the trade interested—and that is an important consideration—does not want you to part with, and which the evidence before you proves is not a declining but an increasing revenue? Above all, will you do this at a moment when Europe is in a condition which must make the boldest man quake and the wisest man tremble? (Great cheering.)" Whether owing to the eloquence of Mr. Disraeli and his followers, or to outside pressure, the majority in favor of the bill was not nearly so large as on the second reading. It was only nine. Small as it was, it was thankfully received by the agitators for repeal, many of whom had been afflicted with gloomy forebodings that, since the opponents of the bill had become so numerous and powerful, it would be rejected altogether.

By the Liberal Press the passing of the bill was, of course, received with acclamation; by their great contemporary, the *Times*, it would be hard to say whether it was welcomed or not. A leading article, of very dubious import, on the third reading, concluded: "We may now, with a free conscience, assume that this money, this £1,200,000, is gone. Whither is it gone? We have already said that it shall not go into our pockets. We hope that the gentry who have been so much more noisy than ourselves will be as honest in this matter as we intend to be. We hope that there may be no such unedifying spectacle as a crowd of regenerators of the human race casting themselves upon this little million like the fainting fugitives from Egypt into the stream which Moses made to flow. We hope that these men, who are so rich and so earnest, who have so long sustained the good work, will scorn to

make a personal gain of the success of their humble efforts, and will give the public the whole benefit of the reduction for which the public pays." Articles written in a tone like this did not do much to farther the cause which they professed to advocate.

In the beginning of the article from which the foregoing extract is taken the *Times* darkly hinted that there was some chance that the bill would be opposed by the Lords. The report proved only too well-founded. On the night of May 10, when the bill was laid upon the table of the House of Lords, Lord Monteagle gave notice that, on the motion for the second reading, he should move that the bill be read a second time that day six months. Lord Derby, at a later period of the sitting, stated that while he should not seek to disturb the general financial arrangements of the government, no effort on his part should be wanting to prevent the repeal of the paper duty.

The excitement caused by this intimation was great. It was immediately announced that a public meeting of the inhabitants of the metropolis would be held in St. Martin's Hall, "to protest against the usurpation of the privileges of the Commons, proposed by Lord Monteagle and Lord Derby, in their motion to retain the paper duties by the authority of the House of Lords, independent of the authority of the House of Commons." Similar meetings were organized at Manchester and other leading centres. The Association for Promoting the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge issued an address to "the Electors of the United Kingdom," pointing out the evils of the paper duty, and protesting against the usurpation by the Lords of the privileges of the Commons. The Liberal Press was by no means sparing in its denunciations of Lord Monteagle's proposal, which was denounced as unconstitutional and unsafe, insulting to the Commons, and an outrage upon the public, justified by no precedent, and scarcely less than revolutionary in its character. *Reynolds's Newspaper*—which may be taken as an example of the extreme Radical Press, then a smaller and less influential body than at present

—described Lord Derby's speech as nothing less than an insolent defiance hurled at the House of Commons. "The haughty peer," the writer went on to say, "is resolved to oppose every measure that has the slightest tendency to liberalize our institutions or promote the interests of the working-classes. He knows that cheap paper means a cheap press—that a cheap press means the spread of intelligence—that the spread of intelligence means political reform—and that political reform means the rights of labor." In language perhaps less heated, but equally forcible, the *Morning Star* dealt with Lord Derby's proposal. "In the present case," it said (May 12), "a million and a quarter of revenue has been given up by the Crown and Commons, which the Lords are asked to insist on retaining. What is that but proposing that the Lords shall provide an additional supply? What greater insult to the Commons, or arbitrary imposition on the people, can be imagined? It is so gross that, if we permit it, we may burn our constitutional writers and our many volumes of precedents. Let us make Lord Derby Premier, with an unexpected surplus in the Treasury—a million or two not asked for by the Crown, not voted by the Commons, not included in the Budget nor appropriated by the estimates, but convenient to his lordship's hand for beginning a war with France or sending an expedition to Japan. Give the Lords and their leader the power of the purse, and you give them the power of the sword."

On May 15 the great indignation meeting announced to be held in St. Martin's Hall took place. It was attended by a numerous and enthusiastic audience. Long before the time fixed for opening, says a contemporary report, the hall was filled literally to the ceiling by persons whose appearance indicated that they belonged to the middle and more respectable portion of the working-classes, their demeanor throughout the proceedings exhibiting the most earnest enthusiasm in behalf of the cause which they were called on to support. Conspicuous among the audience was a very large contingent of London Radicals. On the platform were nine members of Parlia-



ment, two paper-makers, and other influential gentlemen. Mr. Serjeant Perry was called to the chair.

The proceedings were opened by the chairman in a short speech, after which Mr. Beale rose and proposed a long resolution, the purport of which was that the rejection of the bill by the Lords would be subversive of the privileges of the House of Commons, and would tend to impair the authority of the House of Lords. This resolution he supported in a declamatory and somewhat too violent speech. He was seconded by Mr. Rawling, of the Hope Paper Mills, Wrexham, who dwelt on the burdensome nature of the excise duties on paper to the manufacturer. "We are obliged," he said, "to wait constantly. We had the other day a case in our manufactory. We had a telegram stating that a newspaper was in want of an extra supply of paper, in consequence of important intelligence having suddenly come in. The paper was there; it was actually ready to be put into the excise scales; the officer was standing by; he was ready and would have been willing to charge that paper with duty, and to have sent it on, so that all the purposes indicated in the telegram would have been answered; but what was the fact? He had drawn a red line across his book, and that actually prevented him from doing what was desired. He was unable to charge the paper with duty; and the journal was accordingly put to the most serious inconvenience, and many hundreds of readers were, no doubt, disappointed." Referring to the fact that the opponents of repeal so often triumphantly asked, "Why, what is the duty upon Macaulay's 'History of England?'" he made use of a very happy illustration, showing the fallacy of the argument. It would, he said, have been equally valid at the time of the Corn-laws, when it might have been asked, "What benefit shall I get by the repeal of the Corn-laws? The duty amounts to nothing on a plum-cake."

The "speech of the evening" was undoubtedly that of Mr. John Bright, who showed that he had lost none of that passionate fervor, that burning hatred of injustice, that power of



uttering denunciations that cut like steel, which had made him a welcome speaker on many platforms during the Anti-Corn-law League agitation. Why, he asked, when Crown and Commons were agreed with regard to the repeal of the tax, should a House of Parliament, which had never during two hundred years meddled with such a question, step in and dash the cup from the lips of hungry people anxious to satiate their thirst? "I warn the House of Lords," he said, in concluding an address which was received with rapturous enthusiasm, "not for the sake of a duty upon cheap newspapers—not for the sake of any alarm they have at, or any hatred they have of, the cheap Press, to involve themselves in a contest where right will be against them, and where they must fail. But, let them take what course they may, I exhort the people of England—you who are here present to-night, all who shall read my words to-morrow—I exhort them to make this a great question. Your fathers would have made it a great question; they would have maintained, and did maintain, their rights; and you are recreant and unworthy children of theirs if you surrender them in your generation."

The subsequent proceedings of the meeting were the adoption of a petition to the House of Lords deprecating its threatened action, and the appointment of a deputation to wait on the Earl of Derby with an address. A similar meeting was held in Manchester on the same night (May 16), at which speeches resembling those made in St. Martin's Hall were delivered.

Meanwhile, all over the land, the Press, with few and lukewarm exceptions, made its voice heard against the threatened withdrawal of the boon which seemed so nearly within its grasp. Even *Mr. Punch*, laying aside his cap and bells, assumed on this question a tone almost serious. "Lord Derby," he said, "sees a chance of doing mischief to the government, and is going in, he says, for a fight, with little Lord Monteagle for a backer. Encouraged by the small majority on the Paper Bill, their Lordships declare that they will not permit such a

throwing away of revenue, and mean to oppose the second reading in the Lords. This is the first time *Mr. Punch* has heard that, by the constitution as now established, their Lordships have anything to do, except formally, with questions of taxation, and he hopes that Derby and Monteagle will not take it unkind if, in the event of their persisting in the menaced course, he send a fourpenny telegram from Chancery Lane to the Tower of London, instructing the Constable to see that the axe is comfortably sharp, and to order blocks for two." By nearly every newspaper in the land the question was treated in a similar spirit, and there is no doubt that the practically-combined voice of the Press must have been largely efficacious in stirring up the minds of the people to take an interest in the subject, and must thus have helped to strengthen the hands of the government. The constitutional point at issue was discussed at great length; Blackstone found himself for once a popular author; De Lolme was called forth from his dusty retirement that he might give evidence; and an old speech of Lord Lyndhurst's was put into court to bear witness against the high-handed action of the Lords.

In accordance with the arrangement come to at the meeting held in St. Martin's Hall, a deputation waited on the Earl of Derby on May 20 for the purpose of presenting a memorial, couched in strong and decisive language, against the course he proposed to take in opposing the second reading of the Paper Duty Repeal Bill in the House of Lords. The deputation was large and influential, consisting of Mr. Ewart (who, since Mr. Milner Gibson was appointed a member of Lord Palmerston's administration, had acted as president of the Newspaper Press Association), Mr. Serjeant Parry, Mr. C. D. Collet, Mr. George Routledge, Mr. David Chambers, Mr. Petter, Mr. John C. Francis (representing Mr. John Francis), etc. After reading the address, Mr. Serjeant Parry observed, that though it could not be denied that the House of Lords was empowered to refuse to pass any money bill, yet, so far as he could discover, the right had been allowed to remain in abeyance since the Revolution;

and that it was very undesirable that it should be revived. Mr. Ewart, who said he would confine himself purely to the commercial side of the question, laid before Lord Derby four trade reasons why the House of Lords ought to endorse the repeal of the paper duty. They ran as follows :

I. Because, acting upon the faith of the repeal of the paper duty, publishers have entered into contracts for the supply of large quantities of paper, of an increased weight and quality—such paper to be delivered on August 16, the date at which the bill was to come into force—and so, if the bill should be rejected by the House of Lords, these large quantities of paper, inasmuch as they will have been manufactured of a special size, must necessarily be thrown upon the publishers' hands, and a very serious loss must thereby be inflicted upon them.

II. Because, in anticipation of the increase of business consequent on the repeal of the duty, the paper-makers and printers have made arrangements to extend their premises and plant, and have entered into contracts for additional machinery, which will be comparatively useless if the duty be not repealed.

III. Because the proposal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to abolish the duty, and the subsequent progress of the bill through the House of Commons, have been sources of great interruption to the ordinary business of paper-makers, printers, and publishers, causing rags to advance to a price not at all justified by the demand, and causing a corresponding unjustifiable increase in the price of paper ; so that the increase in the price of paper on the one hand, and the anticipation on the other hand that paper would be considerably cheaper as soon as the duty should be removed, have been operating to the serious stagnation and disarrangement of trade, which stagnation and disarrangement would be put an end to if the bill were now passed.

IV. Because, if the bill be not passed this session, the grievous stagnation of trade above explained cannot fail to continue to exist until the duty shall have been actually repealed, by

reason of the belief on all sides that a present rejection of the bill by the House of Lords will only be a postponement of the repeal of the duty to a later, yet early, day.

The views enforced in the foregoing were corroborated by several of the succeeding speakers, as, for example, Mr. Evans (of the firm of Bradbury & Evans), Mr. Petter (of the firm of Cassell, Petter, & Galpin), and Alderman Baldwin, who, as was usual with him, without mincing matters told Lord Derby very plainly what he thought of his conduct in opposing the repeal. In reply to the arguments advanced by the deputation, Lord Derby made a long speech, in which he explained the reasons that had led him to adopt the course on which he had resolved. Seeing that he was determined to adhere to his former purpose, the deputation had nothing for it but to express their thanks to him for the attention with which he had listened to them, and withdraw. At a meeting held immediately afterward the following resolution was carried unanimously: "That this meeting cannot avoid expressing their deep regret that Lord Derby has declared his intention of persisting in the hazardous course of rejecting the bill for the repeal of the paper duty in the House of Lords, and hereby pledge themselves to resist, by every constitutional means, a course so diametrically opposed to Parliamentary usage and practice, and to the rights of the people."

Unfortunately, in spite of all the protests of the Press and the public, a majority of the Lords was, as had been feared from the first, found to be opposed to the repeal of the paper duty. On May 20 the bill was, on its second reading, rejected by the Lords by a majority of 193 to 104. It is deserving of mention, that of eleven bishops who took part in the division eight voted in favor of the repeal. It is remarkable that Lord Lyndhurst, who was then in his ninetieth year, upon this occasion delivered his last speech to their Lordships, dwelling mainly upon the constitutional right of the Lords to the action they were about to take in the rejection of the bill. Although his lordship spoke on this occasion with considerable vigor, he was



glad to avail himself of the support of a barrier which had been erected before him, to assist him while speaking.

It cannot be doubted that the throwing out of the bill by the Lords was a mistake from every point of view. They had put themselves in a false position alike with the Press and the public, and they had hindered the introduction of a reform which, in spite of their opposition, was sure to be carried in a very short time. The Commons soon showed that they were determined to re-assert their control over financial questions. On July 5, 1860, Lord Palmerston submitted to the Lower House the following resolutions:

1. That the right of granting aids and supplies to the Crown is in the Commons alone, as an essential part of their constitution; and the limitation of all such grants, as to matter, manner, measure, and time, is only in them.

2. That although the Lords have exercised the power of rejecting bills of several descriptions by negating the whole, yet the exercise of that power by them has not been frequent, and is justly regarded by this House with peculiar jealousy, as affecting the right of the Commons to grant the supplies and to provide the ways and means for the service of the year.

3. That to guard for the future against an undue exercise of that power by the Lords, and to secure to the Commons their rightful control over taxation and supply, this House has in its own hands the power so to impose and remit taxes and to frame bills of supply, that the right of the Commons as to matter, manner, measure, and time may be maintained inviolate.

The discussion of these resolutions was deferred to the following day, when they were agreed to without a division.

In the following year, 1861, the Budget was presented as a bill in which was included the repeal of the paper duty, as an inclusive measure; and in this form the right of the Commons over taxation was again asserted. In this form also the Budget Bill was presented to the Lords. Lord Derby expressed his resentment at the paper duty repeal being presented in such a form; in fact, he said, it was thrust down the throats of their



lordships. He recommended, however, that it should be accepted, as it was undesirable, in the interests of the nation, that the financial arrangements of the year, as presented by the government, should be disturbed. Accordingly, the bill was passed without a division. Thus at length the paper duty, the last of the taxes on knowledge, was abolished on June 12, 1861, to take effect in October of the same year.

The long struggle for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge having thus been satisfactorily brought to an end, the services of two of the leading workers in the cause were recognized by their being presented with public testimonials. On February 4, 1862, Mr. Milner Gibson, who had been the most active agent in carrying on the Parliamentary campaign, was, in recognition of his successful and strenuous efforts, presented with a service of plate. The presentation was made at a meeting in the Freemasons' Hall, Mr. Ewart, M.P., presiding. At the same time there was handed to Mr. Milner Gibson an address, drawn up by Mr. John Francis. The address, after acknowledging the good work done by Mr. Milner Gibson, briefly sketched the history of the movement from the formation of the two societies having the repeal of the taxes on knowledge as their object, in 1849, to the abolition of the paper duty. It concluded by acknowledging in warm terms the sympathetic action of Mr. Gladstone: "The struggle in respect to the repeal of the paper duty is too recent to require farther remark, except to recognize the signal ability, courage, and perseverance of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Gladstone, whose sound fiscal policy, though attacked through the paper duty, at length triumphed, and the Press of this country became wholly emancipated from taxation."\* This meeting was largely repre-

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\* "The repeal of the excise duty on paper," writes Mr. Gladstone, in an article on "Free-trade, Railways, and Commerce," in the *Nineteenth Century*, vol. vii., p. 374, "had formed a portion of the Budget of 1860. It entailed the severest Parliamentary struggle in which I have ever been engaged; and by the novel action of the House of Lords it was postponed to 1861, when it emancipated, at length, a great article of trade, and allowed the full development of the cheap Press."

sentative, including many gentlemen connected with the Press, and members of Parliament. The City of London was represented by its Sheriffs.

In 1863 the labors of Mr. Francis were likewise recognized by a testimonial. On January 19 of that year a number of gentlemen, representing the Press Association and the Association for the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge, held a meeting at 47 Paternoster Row, for the purpose of presenting to him an acknowledgment of the great services he had rendered during a period of thirteen years in promoting the repeal of the taxes on the Press. Mr. D. N. Chambers (in the unavoidable absence of his brother Robert) occupied the chair, and among the company, which numbered about thirty, were many literary men and publishers. Letters stating that the writers could not be present, but expressing the highest opinion of the good work Mr. Francis had done, were sent from Dr. Robert Chambers, Mr. W. H. Smith, Mr. G. W. Petter, Dr. Gray, of Dublin, and others. The testimonial consisted of a massive silver salver, and a tea and coffee service, bearing the inscription: "Freedom of the Press from Taxation: this salver, together with a tea service, is presented to Mr. John Francis as a testimonial from the Committee and friends of the Press Association, in acknowledgment of his persistent services in promoting the repeal of the taxes on literature and the Press: the advertisement duty repeal, August 4, 1853; the repeal of the compulsory stamp on newspapers, June 15, 1855; and the repeal of the paper duty, October 1, 1861."

The chairman, in presenting the testimonial, eulogized the great services Mr. Francis had most disinterestedly rendered to the cause of pure and cheap literature, and expressed his regret that some parties who had profited largely by the efforts of Mr. Francis should have shown apathy in acknowledging them. He concluded by expressing a hope that Mr. Francis would live long to witness the beneficial results of his able and philanthropic exertions—a wish which, we are glad to say, has been realized.

In reply Mr. Francis delivered an interesting speech, to parts of which we have been indebted for certain statements in the preceding narrative. "During the last twelve or fourteen years," he said, "it has often fallen to my lot to address those whom I desired to interest in the question of Press taxation. I always delivered these addresses with confidence, because I felt myself on sure ground. I knew full well that if the taxes on the Press were repealed, a great public boon would be conferred on the whole community. (Applause.) But on the present occasion you will pardon me if I am somewhat at fault. The kind words uttered by the chairman, the letters from Ireland and Scotland, and the glittering present before me, render it difficult for me to give adequate expression to my feelings." Toward the conclusion of his speech Mr. Francis said the great results which had been achieved were chiefly due to the labors of a few earnest men, who had systematically worked for its attainment. Among statesmen who had done prominent service to the cause he mentioned Lord Brougham, Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton, Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, Mr. Ewart, and Mr. Baines. Among those out of Parliament he felt bound to mention the names of Messrs. Chambers, Mr. Charles Knight, and Mr. Cassell. Mr. Francis then expressed a confident hope that the repeal of the taxes on the Press would in the future produce great moral, educational, and commercial benefits; and, having again rendered his heart-felt thanks for the testimonial, resumed his seat amid hearty applause.

It is in the newspaper and periodical Press that the results of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge are most clearly manifest. With the exception of the paper duty, none of them directly affected the book trade, although the advertisement duty hampered the circulation of literature by preventing it from obtaining such a degree of publicity as was desirable. The effects of the paper duty repeal on books are mainly shown by such publications as shilling Shakespeares, penny editions of the New Testament, and threepenny editions of

the Waverley Novels. It cannot with truth be said that the repeal of the paper duty caused, at the moment, any great or striking reduction in the price of books in general. Its effects in this relation were more of an indirect than of a direct nature: it enabled publishers to get up their books in better style, and to remunerate authors more handsomely.

The effects of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge on the Press were, on the other hand, very great and very striking. We may first consider the results of the reduction of the paper and stamp duties in 1836, and the repeal of the advertisement duty in 1853, and of the compulsory stamp in 1855. For the statistics given below we are indebted to a paper on "The Progress of Periodical Literature from 1830 to 1860," contributed by Mr. John Francis to the *Bookseller* for April 26, 1861.\*

In 1830 the newspapers published in London were sixty-four in number, of which the aggregate weekly issue was 379,747. In 1860 the newspapers published in London (including class journals) were 177 in number, of which the aggregate weekly issue was 2,284,600. Of these newspapers, in 1830 only three mainly circulated among the working-classes, with an aggregate weekly circulation of 75,000. In 1860 the newspapers mainly circulating among the working-classes were eighteen in number, with an aggregate weekly circulation of 730,000. Stamps issued to newspapers published in England in the year 1830, 30,158,741; Ireland (1831), 4,360,564; Scotland (1831), 2,287,750. Total, 36,807,055. While in 1860 the total issue of newspapers and class journals in *London alone* amounted, it is believed, to 118,799,200. Assuming that a corresponding increase had taken place in the coun-

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\* Mr. Francis first entered a newspaper office about the beginning of 1824. Fifty years afterward (in 1874) he made an estimate of what the *Times* of January 1, 1824, would pay for advertisement, stamp, and paper duties, and found it would be no less a sum than £181, or thereabouts. Let the free Press of the day pause for a moment, and think what that meant!



try, the entire newspaper circulation in 1860 may be placed at 221,444,000.

We now come to magazines. No reliable particulars can be ascertained as to the circulation of monthly magazines in 1830. In 1860 the number sold per month by five of the principal wholesale commission houses was 187,158. This may be presumed to be one-half of the whole issue, which may accordingly be fixed at 374,316. The various smaller publications are classified by Mr. Francis as follows:

Religious Literature.—Class: *Leisure Hour*, *British Workman*, *The Appeal*. Published at a half-penny and one penny per number. Monthly issue (exclusive of the tracts and small books issued by the Religious Tract Society, the Weekly Tract Society, the Baptist Tract Society, or the Wesleysans), 2,210,500.

Journals, Useful, Educational, and Entertaining.—Class: *Chambers's Journal* and *Cassell's History of England*. At one penny and three half-pence each. Aggregate weekly issue, 600,000.

Temperance Literature.—Class: *Temperance Advocate* and *Temperance Herald*. Nine in all, at one penny per number. Monthly issue, 203,000.

Journals containing Novels, Tales, etc.—Class: *Family Herald*. Four in number. Aggregate weekly issue, 700,000.

Romances of the "Jack Sheppard" class. Number and circulation varies greatly.

Free-thinking Literature.—*The Reasoner* and *Secular Miscellany*. Circulation small.

Immoral Literature, consisting of tales issued in penny weekly numbers. Seven in all (believed to be purchased by youths of the rough class). Weekly sale, 52,500.

A very good test of the spread of literature is supplied by the increase or decrease in the number of printing establishments. The following figures will, therefore, be found interesting. In 1830 there were 167 master printers carrying on business in London, including lithographic printers; in 1860, 657. In 1830 there were fifty master printers in Birmingham;



in 1860, 142. In 1830 there were thirty-sixty master printers in Manchester; in 1860, 144. In 1830 there were twenty-nine master printers in Liverpool; in 1860, 135. In 1830 there were sixteen master printers in Leeds; in 1860, forty-five.

The effect of the repeal of the paper duty on the circulation of newspapers and magazines was very soon apparent. In 1864 Mr. Francis drew up for Mr. Edward Baines (for whom also the figures given above were supplied) a statement regarding the circulation of the periodical Press in that year, which Mr. Baines made use of in moving the second reading of his borough franchise bill. We quote the more important of the statistics as they were given in the *Bookseller*, May 31, 1864. In 1860 the total issue of newspapers and class journals in London was, as we have seen, estimated at 118,799,200; in 1864 it was 195,062,400, showing an increase of 76,263,200. Equally remarkable was the increase of magazine literature, as may be seen by comparing the following statistics, showing its state in 1864, with those given above, showing its state in 1860:

*Weekly*.—Religious literature: Fifteen publications, at one penny and three half-pence per number. Aggregate issue, 489,600.

Journals, useful, educational, and entertaining: Thirty-two publications, at prices ranging from one penny to threepence. Aggregate issue, 734,000.

Journals containing novels, tales, etc.: Thirteen publications, at a half-penny and one penny per number. Aggregate issue, 1,053,000.

Romantic tales: Eight publications, at one penny per number. Aggregate issue, 195,000.

Immoral publications, at one penny weekly. Aggregate issue, 9000.

Free-thinking literature, twopence. Circulation under 5000.

*Monthly*.—Religious literature: Eighty-four publications, at a half-penny to fivepence per number. Aggregate issue, 1,469,500.

Religious magazines: Twenty-two publications, at sixpence and upward. Aggregate issue, 400,000.

Temperance literature: Twenty publications, at a half-penny to threepence per number. Aggregate issue, 793,250.

Useful, educational, and entertaining: Nineteen publications, at one penny to sixpence per number. Aggregate issue, 338,500.

Monthly magazines and other serials of a higher class: Fifty-four publications, at one shilling to two shillings and sixpence per number. Aggregate issue, 244,850.

Monthly numbers of works issued by large publishing firms, highly embellished and illustrated. Aggregate issue, at prices ranging from one shilling to two shillings and sixpence, 363,250.

The foregoing figures are instructive in many respects. They conclusively prove that the agitators for the repeal of the taxes on knowledge were right in maintaining that, so far would the repeal be from increasing the number of immoral publications, that it would actually greatly diminish them. In 1860 the circulation of immoral periodicals was 52,500; in 1864 it had dwindled to 9000. They show also that the advocates for the repeal of the paper duty were right in their assertion that it would be attended by an immense increase in both the number and circulation of popular periodicals. It is believed that in 1831 the circulation of monthly magazines did not exceed 125,000; at one time the circulation of the *Cornhill Magazine* alone was above that figure.

It may be of interest to compare the number of newspapers published when the agitation for the repeal of taxes on knowledge was begun with the number now issued. In 1849 there were in London 113 papers; in England, 223; in Wales, 11; in Scotland, 85; in Ireland, 101; in the British Islands, 14: total, 547.\* According to Mitchell's "Newspaper Press Di-

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\* These figures are derived from Mr. Knight Hunt's "The Fourth Estate," vol. ii., p. 89.

rectory" for 1881 there are now, in London, 378 newspapers; in England, 1087; in Wales, 66; in Scotland, 181; in Ireland, 154; in the British Isles, 20: total, 1886. This increase, large though it is, gives no real idea of the vastly increased proportions of newspaper circulation within the last thirty years. According to an article by Mr. Francis Hitchman, in the *Quarterly Review* for October, 1880, the *Daily Telegraph* circulates about a quarter of a million daily; the *Standard* (morning and evening issues included), 180,000; and the *Daily News*, 170,000. The reduction of the postal rate of newspapers to a half-penny in 1870 gave a powerful impetus to their circulation, and was especially advantageous to London newspapers.

Large though the periodical circulation of Great Britain and Ireland be, it is quite surpassed by that of the United States. The following statement regarding the Press of the world is from "Hubbard's Newspaper and Bank Directory of the World." Of course the figures given are to be taken as only approximately correct: There are published throughout the world about 30,000 newspapers, including under that name periodical issues of all sorts, from the daily to the slow and ponderous quarterly and semi-annual. Fully one-half of these are printed in the English language. Of this number the United States furnishes, in round numbers, 9500—practically one-third of the whole. Great Britain and Ireland issue 3000, a fraction less than one-third of the number of American newspapers; so that in respect of numbers of presses the Americans certainly have surpassed their British neighbors. The Empire of Germany comes next after the United States, with nearly 5000 periodical presses. France follows with about 2500, of which 1200 emanate from Paris alone. It is worthy of note that London, with 4,000,000 inhabitants, has no more periodical presses than Paris, with 2,000,000; while New York city, with a population of 1,206,000, has about 500; and Brooklyn, with a population of 566,000, has less than twenty-five newspapers of all degrees—in fact, a considerably smaller number

than are published in Copenhagen, whose inhabitants number 200,000; or in Stockholm, with 170,000 residents. Indeed, Algiers, possessing only 53,000 souls, has as many presses at work on newspapers as the City of Churches; while Constantinople, with a population only about 140,000 larger than that of Brooklyn, boasts about twice as many newspapers as the latter, and her papers are published in almost as many different tongues as there are different journals. In respect of daily newspaper issues, Great Britain has no occasion to boast over America; for the nineteen daily journals of London give her 4,000,000 people only 1,009,000 impressions a day, or a little more than one paper to four inhabitants. The nine dailies of Liverpool (population 525,000) have a combined daily circulation of only 255,000. Manchester (population 375,000) issues daily from six presses only 247,000 newspapers. Edinburgh (population 200,000) has four daily journals, with an aggregate edition not larger than 120,000; while Glasgow (population 650,000), with six daily presses, calls for no more than 200,000 copies per day. Even Dublin does, proportionately, a little better than her Scottish neighbor, and considerably better than London, for her six daily presses give her 250,000 people 82,000 daily papers, or one copy to three inhabitants. Thus it does not appear that, in regard to the general demand for daily newspapers, the British public is more exacting than the American. Indeed we find, upon examination, that the cities of London, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dublin, with an aggregate population of six millions, with fifty daily newspapers, demand 1,994,000 copies a day, being at the rate of 103 papers per annum for each individual, estimating 311 publishing days to make a year. On the other hand, the cities of New York, Brooklyn, Jersey City, Newark, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago, with an aggregate population of 3,750,000, having eighty-four daily newspapers, issue an aggregate edition of 1,693,000 copies, being at the rate of 140 copies per annum for each individual.





## THE INTRODUCTION OF GAS.

*MURDOCH, WINSOR, CLEGG, AND OTHERS.*

GAS-LIGHTING, like many other conveniences which tend to promote the comfort of life, is not one of those striking improvements which still continue, like the steam-engine and the electric telegraph, to rivet the attention and dazzle the imagination almost as much as they did on their first introduction. We now read almost incredulously the high-colored language in which, in the infancy of gas-lighting, some writers describe its effects, dwelling on its surpassing radiance, and its wonderful brilliance, making midnight clearer than noonday. It is only when we cast our thoughts back toward the beginning of the present century, and reflect how dirty, how smoky, how feeble must have been the candles and oil-lamps then in use compared with the purity and brilliance of gas-light, that we begin to see that the raptures of the writers to whom we have alluded were not feigned, but really expressive of their genuine sentiments.

The discovery of the inflammable properties of coal-gas is comparatively recent. Coal itself was unknown to the ancients, and was not used as fuel in England till 1238. It is long after this date, however, before we come across the first record of the ignition of coal-gas, which is rather singular, as one would have supposed that the colliers must very soon have become acquainted with the phenomenon. In 1659 a Mr. Thomas Shirley communicated to the Royal Society some experiments on the gas issuing from a well near Wigan, in Lancashire. His paper was printed in the "Philosophical Trans-



actions" for June, 1667, and is rather amusing, on account of the *naïveté* of its language and the quaintness of its style. "About the latter end of February, 1659," he says, "returning from a journey to my house in Wigan, I was entertained with a relation of an odd spring situated in one Mr. Hawkley's ground (if I mistake not), about a mile from the town, in that road which leads to Warrington and Chester.

"The people of this town did confidently affirm that the water of the spring did burn like oyle; into which error they suffered themselves to fall for want of due examination of the following particulars:

"For when we came to the said spring (being five or six in company together), and applied a lighted candle to the surface of the water, 'tis true there was suddenly a large flame produced, which burnt vigorously; at the sight of which they all began to laugh at me for denying what they had positively asserted; but I, who did not think myself confuted by a laughter grounded upon inadvertency, began to examine what I saw; and observing that this spring had its eruption at the foot of a tree, growing on the top of a neighbouring bank, the water of which spring filled a ditch that was there, and covered the burning place lately mentioned; I then applied the lyghted candle to divers parts of the water contained in the said ditch, and found, as I expected, that upon the touch of the candle and the water the flame was extinct.

"Again, having taken up a dishful of water at the flaming place, and held the lighted candle in it, it went out; yet I observed the water at the burning place did boyle and heave like water in a pot upon the fire, though my hand perceived it not so much as warm.

"This boyling I conceived to proceed from the eruption of some bituminous or sulphureous fumes, considering this place was not above thirty or forty yards distant from the mouth of a coal-pit there, and indeed Wigan, Ashton, and the whole country for many miles' compass, is underlaid with coal. Then, applying my hand to the surface of the burning place of the

water, I found a strong breath, as it were a wind, to bear against my hand.

"Then I caused a dam to be made, and thereby hindering the recourse of fresh water to the burning place, I caused that which was already there to be drained away; and then applying the burning candle to the surface of the dry earth at the same point where the water burned before, the fumes took fire and burnt very bright and vigorous; the cone of the flames ascended a foot and a half from the superficies of the earth; the basis of it was of the compass of a man's hat above the brim. I then caused a bucketful of water to be poured on the fire, by which it was presently quenched, as well as my companions' laughter was stopped, who began to think the water did not burn.

"I did not perceive the flame to be discoloured like that of sulphureous bodies, nor to have any manifest scent with it. The fumes, when they broke out of the earth and prest against my hand, were not, to my best remembrance, at all hot."

The flame which Shirley describes was probably produced by carburetted hydrogen gas. The apparent "boiling" of the water had been caused by the bubbling of the gas.

Soon after Shirley's experiments, Dr. John Clayton, Dean of Kildare, actually made coal-gas, and related the results of his labors in a letter to the Hon. Robert Boyle. His letter does not appear to have been publicly known till 1739, when it appeared in the "Philosophical Transactions." On examining a ditch within two miles of Wigan, in Lancashire (apparently the same which Shirley had previously described), "wherein the water would seemingly burn like brandy," he found that though a lighted paper were waved over the ditch, it would not take fire. He then hired a person to make a dam in the ditch and fling out the water, in order to try whether the steam which arose out of the ditch would then take fire; but he found that it would not. Pursuing his experiment, he made the man dig deeper. When he had dug about the depth of half a yard a shelly coal was found; and the candle being then

put down into the hole, the air "caught fire" and continued burning.

Fired with scientific ardor, Clayton determined to carry on his experiments. He got some coal and distilled it in an open fire. "At first," he writes, "there came over only phlegm [steam], afterward a black oil, and then likewise a spirit [gas] arose, which I could in no ways condense, but it forced my lute, and on coming close thereto to repair it, I observed that the spirit which issued out caught fire at the flame of the candle, and continued burning with violence as it issued out in a stream, which I blew out and lighted alternately several times. I then filled a good many bladders therewith, and might have filled an inconceivable number more, for the spirit continued to rise for several hours, and filled the bladders almost as fast as a man could have blown them with his mouth; and yet the quantity of coals was inconsiderable. I kept this spirit in the bladders a considerable time, and endeavored several ways to condense it, but in vain; and when I had a mind to divert strangers or friends, I have frequently taken one of the bladders and pricked a hole therein with a pin, and compressing gently the bladder near the flame of a candle till it once took fire, it would then continue flaming till all the spirit was compressed out of the bladder; which was the more surprising because no one could discern any difference between these bladders and those which are filled with common air."

From the above account we may gather how close an approach was made to gas-lighting considerably more than a century before it was actually introduced. In Clayton's time the mechanical difficulties would probably have been too great to be overcome; but it is a wonder that some speculative individual should not, on seeing his narrative in the "Philosophical Transactions," have been moved to bring forward some scheme for the introduction of lighting by gas. As a matter of fact, Clayton's statements appear to have attracted very little attention of any kind.

In Dr. Stephen Hales's "Vegetable Staticks," published in

1726, there is an account of some chemical experiments he made on pit-coal. In conducting them he found that when the coal was submitted to distillation in close vessels, nearly one-third of it passed off in inflammable vapor.

In the "Philosophical Transactions" for 1733 there is an important paper, "An Account of the Damp Air in a Coal-pit of Sir James Lowther, sunk within Twenty Yards of the Sea." After Lowther's men had sunk the pit of a coal-mine near Whitehaven to the depth of forty-two fathoms, they were surprised to find, instead of water alone, as they expected, "a vast quantity of damp, corrupted air, which bubbled through a quantity of water, then spread over that part of the pit, and made a great hissing noise, at which the workmen, being somewhat surprised, held a candle toward it, and it immediately took fire upon the surface of the water, and burnt very fiercely; the flame being about half a yard in diameter, and near two yards high, which frightened the workmen, so that they took the rope and went up the pit, having first extinguished the flame by beating it out with their hats." The steward of the works having been informed of this wonderful occurrence, went down the pit himself, and again kindled the air. It burnt for half an hour with great fierceness, with a flame blue at the bottom and white toward the top. It was then extinguished as before, and, a greater opening having been made in the black stone bed, was a third time kindled, with results sufficiently alarming. "It burnt a full yard in diameter, and about three yards high, which soon heated the pit to so great a degree that the men were in danger of being stifled, and so were as expeditious as possible in extinguishing the flame, which was then too strong to be beaten out with their hats; but with the assistance of a spout of water, of four inches in diameter, let down from a cistern above, they happily got it extinguished without farther harm." A tube, projecting four feet above the top of the pit, was then constructed, and through it the gas discharged itself. Large bladders were put to the mouth of the tube and filled with gas,



which, the report says, "may be carried away and kept some days, and being afterward pressed gently through a small pipe into the flame of a candle, will take fire, and burn at the end of the pipe as long as the bladder is gently pressed to feed the flame; and when taken from the candle, after it is so lighted, it will continue burning till there is no more air left in the bladder to supply the flame. This succeeded in May last before the Royal Society, after the air had been confined in the bladder for near a month." Like Clayton, Lowther seemed to regard the gas he had discovered in no other light than as a scientific toy.

In 1767 the subject of coal-gas engaged the attention of Dr. Richard Watson (afterward Bishop of Llandaff), who, in the second volume of his "*Chemical Researches*," discusses various points regarding it very fully. He distilled the coal, passed the gas through water, and through pipes from one place to another, and commented on its wonderful inflammability and elasticity. Indeed, as has been well said, he did so much that we are only surprised that he did not introduce it into general use. Many other scientific experimenters followed in Watson's footsteps. For example, Priestley, in his "*Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air*," published in 1790, says: "There are different kinds of inflammable air, as has been observed by most persons who have made experiments with air. That which is commonly observed is, that some of them burn with a flame which may be called a 'lambent flame,' sometimes blue, sometimes yellow, and sometimes white, like the flame from wood or coal, or a common fire; whereas another kind always burns with an explosion, making more or less of a report when a lighted candle is dipped into a jar filled with it. Of the latter kind is that which is extracted from metals by means of acids, etc.; and of the former kind is that which is expelled from wood, coal, and other substances by heat. It is observable that when wood is heated in an earthen retort, the first portion burns with a lambent white flame, like that from burning wood in an open fire."



None of these experimenters, however, seem to have thought of applying gas to practical purposes. The credit of having done this belongs to William Murdoch, who in 1792, while an engineer at Redruth, in Cornwall, erected a little gasometer and apparatus, which produced gas enough to light his own house and offices. Matthews tells us that while Murdoch resided in Cornwall he made gas from every substance he could think of, and had bladders filled with it to carry at night, with which, and his little steam-carriage running on the road, he used to astonish the people there.\*

Though Murdoch does not appear to have found any imitators, he was not discouraged. In 1797 he repeated his experiments upon coal and peat at Old Cumnock, Ayrshire, where he then resided. About this time he communicated to James Watt, Jr., son of *the* James Watt, his views of employing gas as a substitute for lamps and candles, and suggested that a patent should be obtained for that object. Watt replied that he was not quite certain if it were a proper object for a patent, adding that he was induced to be rather nice on the subject of patents, from being at that time engaged in carrying on the defence of a patent which his father had obtained for improvements in the steam-engine, and which had proved a very troublesome and expensive affair. He therefore advised him not to take out a patent, and consequently one was not applied for.

The first application of Murdoch's method on a large scale was at the great foundry of Messrs. Boulton & Watt, at Soho, near Birmingham. While residing there Murdoch made many experiments, with a view to ascertain not only the best modes of making, but also of purifying and burning, the gas, so as to prevent either the smell or the smoke from being offensive. In March, 1802, on occasion of the general illumination for the Peace of Amiens, Murdoch publicly exhibited the gas-light.

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\* "Historical Sketch of Gas-lighting," by William Matthews (1827), p. 22.

Matthews, who was an eye-witness of the spectacle, writes: "The illumination of Soho Works on this occasion was one of extraordinary splendor. The whole front of that extensive range of buildings was ornamented with a great variety of devices, that admirably displayed many of the varied forms of which the gas-light was susceptible. This luminous spectacle was as novel as it was astonishing; and Birmingham poured forth its numerous population to gaze at, and to admire, this wonderful display of the combined effects of science and art." In this description there appears to be considerable exaggeration, so far as it relates to the gas-lights. Samuel Clegg, whose father assisted at the illuminations, says that only two large gas-lights were employed, one placed at each end of the manufactory, the rest of the building being illuminated by small glass oil-lamps.

While Murdoch was thus gradually bringing gas-light into notice in England, a Frenchman of the name of Le Bon was doing the same in France. At the end of the year 1801 the brother of James Watt, Jr., being in Paris, wrote, saying "that if anything were to be done with Murdoch's light no time should be lost, because he had heard that a Frenchman named Le Bon was at the same period endeavoring to apply the gas obtained from the distillation of wood to similar purposes." At the Peace of Amiens, Le Bon lighted up his house in Paris with gas, as Murdoch had done the Soho foundery.

About this time Winsor, a German, being at Brunswick, saw an account concerning the manufacture of Le Bon's gas for illuminating purposes which had been read before the French Institute. "The thought," he wrote, in his habitually exaggerated language, "of introducing the discovery for the great advantage of the British realm, struck me like an electric spark, which has ever been kept alive in my mind, and added from day to day, from week to week, fresh fuel to my hopes of rendering it generally beneficial." Some say that Winsor was for a time Le Bon's assistant, but very little appears to be known for certain about him. In 1802 he arrived in England, and,

according to Matthews, became acquainted with a Mr. Kenzie, who resided in Green Street, near Hyde Park. This gentleman, having acquired opulence as a coach-maker, had retired from business; and, his premises being unoccupied, he allowed Winsor the use of them to make his first experiments on the production of gas from coal. Here Winsor continued his operations for some time, under great disadvantages arising from various causes, but particularly from his deficiency in chemical and mechanical skill. "But," says Matthews, "he was industrious, persevering, and confident; and the brilliancy of the lights, the novelty of the scheme, added to the extraordinary advantages which he held forth as likely to be the consequence of its introduction and use, encouraged Mr. Kenzie and a few other persons to assist him in the furtherance of his views, so as to enable him, at a subsequent period, to make his public display of gas-lighting."

Winsor was a born speculator; and, if he had lived in the time of the railway mania, might have rivalled the famous "King Hudson." It must be remembered that he had almost every disadvantage which it is possible to think of to contend with. He was a foreigner, who could speak English very imperfectly only; he had no capital; he had very little acquaintance with chemistry or with scientific manipulation. One essential requisite for a good speculator he, indeed, appears to have had in ample measure—he had a thorough belief in his own schemes, however wild and extravagant they were; and he possessed a temperament so sanguine that no difficulties or defeats could discomfit him.

In 1804 he publicly exhibited his plan of illumination by coal-gas in the Lyceum Theatre, in London, delivering lectures on the subject, illustrated by appropriate experiments. Among other things he showed the manner of conveying the gas from one part of a house to another, and, by the use of different kinds of burners, displayed the variety of forms which might be given to the flame. He also expatiated largely on the utility of coal-gas, and its vast superiority over every other kind of

light. His lectures were delivered under many disadvantages. His assistants were often very ignorant, and quite incompetent to discharge the work required of them; not being well acquainted with English, he was obliged to engage a person to read his lectures for him, who sometimes failed to put in an appearance, to the disappointment and disgust of his audience; and last, but by no means least, his gas, from being burnt in a very impure state, was offensive to the smell, which greatly annoyed the audience, and tended to produce a dislike to gas-lighting. The process by which the gas was generated, and its management before it passed through the burners, Winsor kept enveloped in mysterious secrecy.

In May, 1804, Winsor obtained a patent for “an improved oven, stove, or apparatus for the purpose of extracting inflammable air, oil, pitch, tar, and acids from, and reducing into coke and charcoal, all kinds of fuel, which is also applicable to various other useful purposes. . . . The inflammable gas or air may be led in a cold state through tubes of silk, paper, earth, wood, or metal, to any distance, in houses, rooms, gardens, palaces, parks and streets (and other places), to produce light and heat, or for any other purpose, such as for increasing and multiplying force and power.” This was the first patent obtained in connection with gas-lighting; and henceforth Winsor described himself as the discoverer, inventor, and patentee of gas-lighting—to only the last of which titles he had the slightest claim.

Meanwhile, in other directions gas-lighting was making fair progress. In 1803 the Soho foundery was lighted with gas by Murdoch, by whom also, in 1805, gas was introduced into the extensive cotton-mills of Messrs. Phillips & Lee, of Salford. The task proved a very arduous one, owing to the fact that but little skill had then been attained in the art of manufacturing apparatus for gas-lighting, and occupied about two years. In a paper read before the Royal Society on February 25, 1805, Murdoch described his method of lighting by means of coal-gas. The coal was distilled in large iron retorts, which, during



the winter season, were kept constantly at work, except during the intervals of charging. The gas, as it rose from them, was conveyed by iron pipes into large reservoirs, where it was washed and purified, previous to its being conveyed through other pipes, called mains, to the mills. The burners were of two kinds: one upon the principle of the argand lamp, and resembling it in appearance; the other a small curved tube, with a conical end, having three circular apertures of about one-thirtieth of an inch in diameter—one at the point of the cone, and two lateral ones—through which the gas issued, forming three divergent jets of flame, somewhat like a *fleur-de-lis*. The number of burners employed in all the buildings amounted to 271 argands and 633 of the other kind, each of the former of which gave a light equal to four mould-candles of six to the pound, and each of the latter a light equal to two and a quarter candles of the same description. Murdoch estimates the expense of lighting the mills by gas for two hours a day per year at about £600. The cost of candles giving the same amount of light for the same time would, he says, be about £2000. Besides its economy, gas possessed many other advantages. “The peculiar softness and clearness of this light, with its almost unvarying intensity, have brought it into great favor with the workpeople; and its being free from the inconvenience and danger resulting from the sparks and frequent snuffing of candles, is a circumstance of material importance, as tending to diminish the hazard of fire, to which cotton-mills are known to be much exposed.” Murdoch’s report of the work he had accomplished is a very sober, business-like document, contrasting strongly with Winsor’s absurd prospectuses. As a reward for his enterprise, the Royal Society presented him with Count Rumford’s gold medal in 1808, in which year his communication was published in the “Philosophical Transactions.”

At the same time as Murdoch was employed in erecting the gas-works at Messrs. Phillips & Lee’s mills, Samuel Clegg, then a pupil of Messrs. Boulton, Watt, & Co., was similarly employ-



ed in lighting the cotton-mill of Henry Lodge, at Sowerby Bridge, near Halifax. To Clegg belongs the merit of having devised a method of purifying coal-gas from sulphuretted hydrogen, which gave it a very offensive smell, besides being injurious otherwise. By passing the gas through lime-water, previous to its entering the gas-holder, he was able to get almost entirely rid of the sulphuretted hydrogen. This method he first used when erecting, in 1807 and 1808, gas-works at the Catholic College at Stonyhurst, in Lancashire. After this gas-lighting made tolerably rapid advances. "The progress of the new science," writes Samuel Clegg, Jr., "as hitherto related, was chiefly due to the individual efforts of Mr. Murdoch and his assistants; based upon their connection with the Soho establishment. Let it not, however, be supposed that Messrs. Boulton, Watt, & Co. were the sole manufacturers of gas-apparatus. The successful experiments, and their practical result, which had emanated from Soho, attracted immediate attention. Philosophers, engineers, mechanics, and capitalists were soon in motion. Chemists were busy in the laboratory and at the lecture-table, illustrating the properties and teaching the economical application of coal-gas. Engineers and mechanics were occupied in devising the best forms of apparatus. The prudent capitalist was calculating the amount of his annual savings; while the mere speculator was thinking only of the immense gains to be quickly acquired by a comparatively trifling investment." Among the many chemists who did something to advance gas-lighting, may be mentioned Dr. Henry, of Manchester, who illustrated the mode of making gas in his lectures, and showed how easily and economically it might be used as a substitute for oil and candles.

While these applications of gas-lighting on a large scale were being carried on Winsor was not idle. He set himself forward as the champion of coal-gas, and alike by tongue and pen carried on a vigorous war with its opponents. Sometimes he even broke forth into verse, of which the following may serve as a sample:

"Must Britons be condemned forever to wallow  
In filthy soot, noxious smoke, train-oil, and tallow,  
And their poisonous fumes forever to swallow?  
For with sparky soot, snuffs, and vapors men have constant strife—  
Those who are not burned to death are smothered during life."

The last line may claim the possession of a little epigrammatic point. Prose, however, and not verse, was Winsor's favorite mode of addressing the public; and many of the papers he drew up will still bear reading, on account of their absurdity and grotesque exaggeration. Referring to his early difficulties at the Lyceum Theatre, he says: "Animated by the life and example of Peter the Great, Emperor of all the Russias, who performed the most abject labors to teach his ministers and generals how to civilize a barbarous nation, I did no longer deem it beneath me (who had been a merchant in the City of London) to do that work which some of my laborers, actually in want of bread, refused to do for victuals and payment. It is this persevering spirit and constant labor, during the last five years, which has put me in possession of that large practice of which all the learned theorists and retort practitioners had despaired, from the difficulties of their miniature experiments." In another of his publications, in reply to the question whether gas was hurtful to respiration, he says: "Not in the least! On the contrary, it is more congenial to our lungs than vital air, which proves too strong a medicine, because it only exists from one-fifth to one-fourth in the atmosphere; whereas, inflammable air exists above two-thirds in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, in all our drink and victuals. It forms a part of ourselves."

Let us do Winsor justice. If many of the arguments he put forward on behalf of gas were absurd, they were not one whit more absurd than those advanced by its opponents. The oil-light companies naturally looked on their new and formidable competitor with aversion, and endeavored, so far as they could, to prejudice the public mind against it. So much was the danger of gas-exploding magnified, that it was said that a town

could be destroyed by the explosion of the main pipes in the streets. Moreover, it was said that if lighting by gas were introduced, the naval supremacy of the nation was gone. "If," it was remarked, "this becomes successful, then our naval supremacy is gone, for at present we obtain our artificial light principally from the whale-fisheries: these are the nurseries of our best sailors; therefore, if we destroy the one the other must be affected; if the fisheries no longer exist, our navy must degenerate."

Ever since (in 1804) Winsor had obtained his patent, he had made active efforts to form a company to bring his great plan into execution. To aid him in this, he issued certain prospectuses, reminding one of nothing so much as those veracious advertisements headed "A Fortune for a Trifle." Gas was to be used universally for lighting, and coke for fuel; those who continued to use candles or coals were to be severely taxed for their obstinacy. He proved, to his own satisfaction, and, it would appear, to the satisfaction of a few equally sanguine individuals, that from every £5 deposited in his "*National Light and Heat Company,*" an annual income of £570 would be derived. By holding out these glittering prospects he succeeded in obtaining a capital of £20,000, preliminary to the formation of a company. Early in 1807 he removed his apparatus to extensive premises in Pall Mall, on the site of the present Carlton Club. In the same year he lighted up a part of one side of the street by gas, and shortly afterward the whole street was thus illuminated. This was the first public street ever lighted by gas.

The "*National Light and Heat Company*" started with sufficiently exalted aims. It was the intention of Winsor and his subscribers that it should be really a *national* company, and that they should obtain a royal charter, or exclusive privilege, for lighting all the British possessions by gas; for which purpose they proposed to raise a capital of one million sterling. A memorial was presented to the King, setting forth the advantages that would arise from the introduction of gas, and

from the production and general employment of coke, and praying that his Majesty would be pleased to grant the company an exclusive charter. When, however, the question had been duly considered by the Privy Council, it was decided that the King could not grant a charter of incorporation until a bill had been obtained from Parliament authorizing the company. In the following year (1809) Winsor and his shareholders accordingly applied to Parliament to obtain a bill authorizing the "National Light and Heat Company." They were strongly opposed by Murdoch, who incontestably proved, by the evidence of a number of witnesses, his claim to priority in adopting gas for illumination. Their application was, therefore, rejected. It is probable that Winsor's puffing advertisements, and the defective evidence given by Mr. Accum, a chemist who had become associated with Winsor, and who, like him, loved to envelop the process of gas-manufacture in the greatest mystery, had a good deal to do with the rejection.

Nothing daunted, Winsor and his associates again, in 1810, applied to Parliament for an act of incorporation as "The Gas-light and Coke Company," with a capital of £200,000. This time they were partially successful, and obtained an act to authorize his Majesty to grant them a charter within three years from the passing of the act. The fair proportions of their bill as originally produced were, however, sadly curtailed. Certain conditions were imposed, which limited their powers to London, Westminster, and Southwark, and the suburbs adjoining; and it was besides stipulated that, if required, they should contract with the parishes of London, Westminster, and Southwark to furnish a stronger and better light, and at a cheaper and lower price, all expenses included, than the rate at which such parishes could be supplied with oil. Various other stringent regulations were imposed on the company, which we need not relate in detail. In 1812 a charter was granted to it.

The early experiences of the company were far from being of an encouraging kind. It commenced its operations in a large wharf and premises in Cannon Row, Westminster. This



place was soon found very inconvenient, and was abandoned—not, however, before a large amount of money had been spent in experiments which did not appear to lead to any useful result. Winsor's principal assistants were the Mr. Accum already mentioned and Mr. Hargreaves—men who, though possessing considerable chemical skill, do not appear to have had much practical knowledge of gas-lighting.

Early in 1813, when the affairs of the company seemed in a very bad way, by an unusual stroke of good fortune the services of Samuel Clegg were secured as its engineer. Clegg, as we have seen, was one of the first who had successfully lighted large buildings by gas, and his name was well and favorably known as that of one who had suggested various ingenious improvements in gas-lighting. In 1812 he attracted considerable attention in London by lighting the premises then occupied by Mr. Ackerman in the Strand. His son relates that the gas-lights there attracted much attention, and were greatly admired. A lady of rank was so astonished and delighted with the brilliancy of a lamp fixed on the shop-counter, that she begged to be allowed to carry it home in her carriage, offering to pay whatever might be charged for a light so far superior to any she had before seen! It may be questioned whether, if Clegg had not been engaged as its engineer, the company would not speedily have wholly collapsed. Winsor was quite destitute of the mechanical skill to guide it over its early difficulties, and those associated with him do not appear to have been much better practical workmen than he was.

Clegg found his new position full of difficulties. The capital of the company was pretty nearly exhausted, yet it was necessary to incur no small amount of additional expense. Much of the existing apparatus was discarded as being perfectly useless, and new machines were constructed on an improved plan. Moreover, the prejudice entertained against gas-light, even by those who ought to have known better, was still great. Sir Humphry Davy thought that lighting a town by gas was so visionary a scheme, that he asked Clegg whether it was intended



to take the dome of St. Paul's for a gasometer. Clegg replied that he hoped to see the day when gasometers would not be much smaller—a prediction which has been more than realized.

To obviate the objections of many to gas, the company did not at first seek to make any profit by it. For two years it fitted up and supplied shops and houses with gas free of expense, in order to induce others to adopt the same mode of lighting. Many very absurd notions about the new light were entertained. Clegg relates that it was generally believed that the pipes conveying the gas must be hot; and that when the passages to the House of Commons were lighted, the architect insisted upon the pipes being placed four or five inches from the wall, for fear of fire. The Royal Society did not show itself much more intelligent in this matter than the architect of the House of Commons. After the new gas-works at Peter Street, Westminster, which had been erected under Mr. Clegg's supervision, had been for some time in operation, Sir Joseph Banks and several other members of the Royal Society were deputed to examine and report on the gas-apparatus. "The deputation strongly recommended the government to compel the company to erect gas-holders which should contain not more than 6000 cubic feet each, and which should be secured in strong buildings. As Sir Joseph Banks and some of the other members of the deputation were in the gasometer-house, conversing about the danger of a leak in the gas-holder if a light happened to be near, Mr. Clegg called to a man, and desired him to bring a pickaxe and candle. He then struck a hole in the side of the vessel, and applied the light to the issuing gas, to the no small alarm of all present, most of whom quickly retreated. Contrary to their expectations, no explosion resulted from the experiment. This practical proof of the safety of the gas-holders did not, however, convince them of their error, and the Chartered Gas Company were put to considerable expense in making small gas-holders, surrounded by substantial buildings." It really seems almost incredible that a deputation from the Royal Society should have been so fool-

ish as not to see that, if its contents were really explosive, the stronger the gas-holder was made the greater would be the liability to injury should an accident occur.

About the end of 1813 an explosion occurred in the works at Westminster, which had the effect of making the public for some time timid in the use of gas. The only one seriously injured by the accident was Clegg, who gives the following account of it: "There was a vault near the gasometer, in which the lime-machine belonging to the apparatus was contained; the workmen, on letting the lime-water out of the vessel, removed too great a quantity of it, and allowed the gas to escape at the valve, where the lime-water was drawn off into the vault. Where the light originated I am not prepared to say; whether from some person coming in with a candle, or by a communication from the flue of the retorts, there was a connection of that kind, I cannot say; the effect of it was, that it blew my hat off my head, and destroyed it and blew it all to pieces, and knocked down two nine-inch walls, and injured me very much at the time, and burnt all the skin off my face, and the hair off my head, and I was laid up a fortnight or three weeks by it" —a rather graphic if somewhat doleful narrative.

On December 31, 1813, Westminster Bridge was for the first time lighted with gas. The lamplighters were so much startled at the novelty that they refused to work, and Clegg had for a few nights to light the lamps himself. In the following year the parochial authorities of St. Margaret's, Westminster, applied for a contract to have their streets lighted by gas; and on April 1 the old oil-lamps were removed, and their places taken by gas-lamps. It was now clear to everybody of penetration that the day of the oil-lamps was past, and companies began to be formed for introducing gas into various parts of the kingdom. About this time Clegg was employed in directing the operations for lighting Bristol, Birmingham, Chester, Kidderminster, and Worcester.

In 1814, when the Allied Sovereigns visited England, and a general illumination took place, gas-light was brought into

requisition to add to the attractions of the metropolis. A pagoda, erected by order of government, in St. James's Park, was lighted by over ten thousand gas-burners of various kinds, and attracted great attention. It was exhibited to the Prince Regent and most of the members of the Royal Family on the night before the general illumination took place, which was fortunate, as, on the following night, Sir William Congreve, contrary to the wishes and advice of Mr. Clegg, insisted upon letting off fireworks from the pagoda before lighting it up. The consequence was that the whole structure was burnt to the ground, which gave occasion for a few ill-disposed persons to circulate a report that the gas had set fire to the pagoda—a report which, for a time, retarded the operations of the gas company. On November 9, 1815, Guildhall was lighted by gas, with great success. The new light was described as “completely penetrating the whole atmosphere, and at the same time so genial to the eyesight, that it appeared as natural and pure as daylight, shedding a warmth as purifying to the air as it was cheering to the spirits.”

In 1815, also, Clegg patented the first gas-meter invented. Till this time there had been no certain method of indicating the quantity of gas used by consumers, and hence the company was liable to frequent impositions. Clegg's meter, though ingenious for the time, was far from a perfect instrument. It was afterward altered and improved by Crosley. In 1817 John Malam, an ingenious mechanician, who is said to have been at one time employed as Clegg's draughtsman, invented another and better description of instrument for measuring gas, which led to the construction of the meter now almost universally used. When Malam presented his meter to the notice of the Society of Arts, Clegg asserted that it had been copied from him. The charge was investigated by a committee of the Society, who, after due deliberation, gave their verdict in favor of Malam, by awarding him their gold medal for his “invention of a gas-meter, new, ingenious, superior to all others, and likely to be of great benefit to the public.”

As early as 1805 the attention of Dr. Henry was directed to the manufacture of *oil-gas*, which, he endeavored to show, was superior to any other in yielding light. No practical result followed from his papers on this subject till 1815, when John Taylor obtained a patent for producing gas from "any kind of animal, vegetable, or mineral oil, fat, bitumen, or resin, which is, or can be, rendered fluid by heat or otherwise." Several wealthy gentlemen became associated with Taylor, and in 1819 oil-gas was made use of to light Apothecaries' Hall and some other places. The advocates for this rival to coal-gas do not seem to have been particularly scrupulous in their assertions; puffing notices of the new invention were freely issued, and some rather unfair attempts made to injure coal-gas in public estimation. However, several eminent scientific men gave their opinion in favor of oil-gas, and for a time it obtained considerable popularity. In 1823 a "London and Westminster Oil-gas Company" was projected. The coal-gas companies determined to oppose their rival, and accordingly a petition was presented to the House of Commons, describing the rise and progress of the Chartered Company, and alluding to "the prejudices and difficulties which they had overcome, the sacrifices they had made, together with the hazard and expense they had incurred in the course of their operations, from which the public had in many respects derived great advantages." The matter was investigated by a committee of the House of Commons, which held an inquiry extending over several months, and which finally decided against the Oil-gas Company. Among the witnesses examined before it were several gentlemen who had the charge of oil-gas works, and who described the loss arising from them, and the necessity of employing coal-gas in order to render their operations remunerative. Oil-gas companies were afterward established in several towns; but they all soon came to nothing, as it was found that oil-gas could not be manufactured at a rate nearly cheap enough to compete with coal-gas.

One use to which oil-gas was for a short time turned de-



serves to be mentioned. In 1819 David Gordon obtained a patent for malleable iron and copper vessels of great strength, fitted with valves of a peculiar kind, and ingeniously constructed so as to regulate the emission of the gas. The vessels were made sufficiently strong to allow thirty volumes of the gas to be compressed into the space commonly occupied by one. Gordon's inventions led to the formation of "The Portable Gas Company." "The gas," says Matthews, writing in 1827, "is condensed in globes, urns, and other vessels of various forms as well as capacities, and some of their contrivances for its use are elegant, and withal so convenient as to be easily conveyed from one room to another. In the metropolis the operations of this company have been carried to a considerable extent, and the scheme has given rise to some similar establishments in other places." It was soon found, however, that the scheme would not answer, and the company was broken up.

The pioneers of gas-lighting did not find that their strenuous efforts led to any great pecuniary reward. Everything connected with the manufacture of gas was at first enormously dear, and "the skilled labor so essential to success could not be obtained at any price." Again, new companies were constantly cropping up, and hence ensued ruinous competition. "When," writes Mr. Richards, "we look back and consider the facts, we are at a loss to assign any reason for such extraordinary proceedings, inasmuch as for many years there were but few companies that paid their expenses, while many were on the brink of ruin; yet this did not deter the formation of other similar enterprises. Take as an example the metropolis: the Imperial Company from the date of its formation for years never realized one shilling profit. The same observations apply to the Phoenix and the City of London, which were all in operation before 1819; and only one, the Chartered, earned very moderate profits. Still, in the face of these facts, the London, Equitable, and South Metropolitan Companies were all established about the same period to oppose existing enterprises, with, during many years, the worst results, inasmuch as



the two first-mentioned undertakings struggled for nearly twenty years without earning a dividend, and only at the end of seven years after it commenced operations was the South Metropolitan remunerative.

By 1822 gas-lighting had made such rapid progress in London, that in that year it was found that the capital invested in the gas-works of the metropolis amounted to about a million sterling; while the pipes connected with the various establishments embraced an extent of upward of a hundred and fifty miles. Its extension to all the larger towns of the kingdom soon followed, and by-and-by the smaller ones also received the benefit of the new mode of illumination. On the Continent gas-lighting did not at first make such rapid progress as in this country. Paris, however, was lighted by gas in 1820, to the great admiration of all beholders. Ere long gas made its way into all the chief towns of Europe; then America adopted the improvement; and at length even the principal cities of Australia followed suit. By 1845 gas may be said to have practically driven all other modes of illumination out of the field.

Whether gas in its turn will have to give way to the electric light is a question on which it is, perhaps, premature to speculate as yet. Most people are of opinion that electric-lighting, though it may be for an uncertain time delayed, is sure to be eventually adopted, at any rate so far as streets and public buildings are concerned. Its whiter and more daylight color, and its coolness, give it considerable advantages over gas. But the gas companies need not despair, though in the course of the next fifty years gas as a means of illumination be entirely superseded. At a conference of gas managers held at Birmingham, Dr. C. W. Siemens, on June 14, 1881, read a paper on "Gas Supply, both for Heating and Illuminating Purposes." Referring to the fact that the lighting of the city of London and of public halls and works furnished proof that the electric light was not an imaginary but a real competitor with gas as an illuminant, he said that he presented himself before the conference both as a rival and a friend—as a rival, because he was

one of the promoters of electric illumination ; and as a friend, because he had advocated the use of gas for heating purposes for the last twenty years, and was not disposed to relinquish his advocacy of gas both as an illuminating and as a heating agent. "Speaking as a gas-engineer," he went on to observe, "I should be disposed to regard the electric light as an incentive to fresh exertion, confidently anticipating achievements by the use of gas which would probably have been long postponed under the continued *régime* of a monopoly. Already we observe, thanks chiefly to Mr. Sugg, both in our thoroughfares and in our apartments, gas-burners producing a brighter light than was to be seen previously ; and although gas will have to yield to the electric light the illumination of our light-houses, halls, and great thoroughfares, it will be in a position, I believe, to hold its own as a domestic illuminant, owing to its convenience of usage, and the facility with which it can be subdivided and regulated. The loss which it is likely to sustain in large applications as an illuminant would be more than compensated by its use as a heating agent, to which the attention of both the producer and the consumer has lately been largely directed." It appears that the gas yielded at the beginning and at the close of the distillation of coal is of low illuminating but of high heating power, while that yielded in the intermediate period is of low heating but of high illuminating power. Dr. Siemens, therefore, proposes that the gas produced at the beginning and the end of the distillation be turned into one receptacle, and the gas produced in the intermediate period into another, the former to be used solely for heating, the latter solely for illuminating purposes. "The public," he says, "could well afford to pay an increased price for a gas of greatly increased illuminating power, and the increase of revenue thus produced would enable the gas companies to supply heating-gas at a proportionately reduced rate. The question may be asked whether a demand would be likely to arise for heating-gas similar in amount to that for illuminating-gas ; and I am of opinion that, although the present amount of gas supplied

for illuminating purposes exceeds that for heating, the diminution in price for the latter would very soon indeed reverse the proportions. Already gas is used in rapidly-increasing quantities for kitcheners, for gas-engines, and for fire-grates. As regards the latter application, I may here mention that an arrangement for using gas and coke jointly in an open fireplace, combined with a simple contrivance for effecting the combustion of the gas by heated air, has found favor with many of the leading grate-builders and with the public."





## THE STEAM-ENGINE, AND ITS APPLICATION TO LOCOMOTION BY LAND AND WATER.

WATT, STEPHENSON, FULTON, AND BELL.

“If a man were to propose to convey us regularly to Edinburgh in coaches in seven days, and bring us back in seven more, should we not vote him to Bedlam? Or if another were to assert he would sail to the East Indies in six months, should we not punish him for practising on our credulity?”

These words were spoken in the House of Commons by a certain worthy member, Sir Henry Herbert, in 1671. What would he have thought if he had been told that within one hundred and sixty years the journey from London to Edinburgh, instead of occupying seven days, would not occupy much more than seven hours; and that, within the same period, a voyage from this country to India which occupied six months would be reckoned unconscionably tedious? In Herbert's time the chance of the means of locomotion becoming so rapid certainly appeared very remote, and his incredulity was doubtless amply justified by the facts before him. There is not, however, the same excuse for the early opponents of the railway system, some of whose utterances appear very strange when read in the light of subsequent events. In 1825 the *Quarterly Review* wrote: “The gross exaggeration of the powers of the locomotive steam-engine, or, to speak more plainly, the steam-carriage, may delude for a time, but must end in the mortification of those concerned. . . . It is certainly some consolation to those who are to be whirled at the rate of eighteen or twenty miles an hour, by means of the high-pressure



GEORGE STEPHENSON.



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engine, to be told that they are in no danger of being sea-sick while they are on shore, that they are not to be scalded to death nor drowned by the bursting of the boiler, and that they need not mind being shot by the scattered fragments, or dashed in pieces by the flying off or the breaking of a wheel. But with all these assurances we should as soon expect the people of Woolwich to suffer themselves to be fired off by one of Congreve's ricochet rockets, as trust themselves to the mercy of such a machine going at such a rate. . . . We will back old Father Thames against the Woolwich Railway for any sum." The *Quarterly* by no means stood alone in its opinions; indeed, it may safely be said that, so far as its views on railways are concerned, it represented the great majority of the nation. Like all those who introduce great improvements, the early promoters of railways had many disappointments and difficulties to contend with; many obstacles beset their path which were none the less real and harassing to them, because they appear in rather a ludicrous light to us.

The history of the steam-engine, which gave us our railways, and has been the mainspring of most of the material progress of our country during the last hundred years, reaches very far back. The ancients—at least the few of them who dabbled in physics—were not without some knowledge of the wonderful properties and powers of steam. Hero of Alexandria, who lived about two hundred years before the Christian era, gives an account of a rather ingenious toy, of which steam was the motive power. From his time till 1615 the notices we find of steam as an agent are scanty and comparatively unimportant. In that year Solomon de Caus, a French engineer, published a work on "*Moving Forces*," in which he describes a method of raising water by partially heating it; that is, by converting a portion of it into steam, and, by its expansive force, driving the rest of the fluid through the tube connected with the reservoir. More important than De Caus's were the inventions of Edward Somerset, the ingenious Marquis of Worcester. In his "*Century of the Names and Scantlings of Inventions*," published in

1663 (which Hume, in one of the notes to his "History of England," very unjustly describes as "a ridiculous compound of lies, chimeras, and impossibilities, showing what might be expected from such a man"), he describes "an admirable and most forcible way to drive up water by fire." Worcester's machine was actually used for the purpose of elevating water at Vauxhall, and hence he is entitled to due honor as having been the first of those who contrived steam-engines to reduce his invention to practice. Though it had been proved to be useful, his machine was regarded with no favor, and never came into general use. Macaulay, describing the state of society in England in the seventeenth century, writes: "They were not, it is true, quite unacquainted with that power which has produced an unprecedented revolution in human affairs. The Marquis of Worcester had recently observed the expansive power of moisture rarefied by heat. After many experiments, he had succeeded in constructing a rude steam-engine, which he called a fire-water-work, and which he pronounced to be an admirable and most forcible instrument of propulsion. But the marquis was suspected to be a madman, and known to be a Papist; his invention, therefore, found no favorable reception."

The next great name in the history of the steam-engine is that of Denis Papin, well known as the inventor of Papin's Digester. He was born in 1647, at Blois, where a statue—which was unveiled on Sunday, August 29, 1880—has been erected in his honor. To Papin, whom we shall afterward have occasion to refer to when treating of the application of the steam-engine to locomotion by water, we owe the invention of the safety-valve, although he did not apply it to the steam-engine. The first in England to manufacture steam-engines which came into general use was Thomas Savery, who was born at Shilston, about 1650. After many experiments, he succeeded in making an engine in whose powers he had such confidence that he exhibited it before William III. and his court, at Hampton Court, in 1698. Its performances gave such satisfaction that he obtained a patent for it without de-

lay. The title of the patent runs thus: "A grant to Thomas Savery, gentl., of the sole exercise of a new invention by him invented for raising of water, and occasioning motion to all sorts of mill-works, by the impellant motion of fire, which will be of great use for draining services, serving towns with water, and for the working of all sorts of mills when they have not the benefit of water nor constant winds; to hold for fourteen years; with usual clauses." Savery exerted himself to get his engine brought into use, and lost no opportunity of showing its powers. He exhibited it before the Royal Society, in whose minutes we read: "Mr. Savery entertained the Society with showing his engine to raise water by the force of fire. He was thanked for showing the experiment, which succeeded according to expectation, and was approved of." Moreover, he advertised his invention in all ways accessible to him, and published a pamphlet containing an account of it, in the hope of introducing it as a pumping-engine in the mining districts of Cornwall. In this hope he was disappointed; few mines could be got to use his machine, and it was not very successful when it was used; but it was somewhat extensively employed for supplying water to towns, and several large estates, country and other private establishments, employed it for the same purpose. After Savery's death his engine was improved by Dr. Desaguliers, who provided it with the safety-valve.

Passing over the many mechanics who, shortly after the time of Savery, introduced improvements of more or less value, we come to Thomas Newcomen, who invented an engine of such merit as to entitle him to a very high place among the improvers of the steam-engine. Newcomen, an ironmonger and blacksmith, of Dartmouth, and Calley, a glazier, of the same town, constructed in 1711 "an engine upon Papin's principle of a piston and a condensing process, using, however, Savery's mode of creating a vacuum by cold affusion, for which they were led by an accident to substitute the method of throwing a jet or stream of cold water upon the cylinder. This important improvement saved in a considerable degree the waste

of heat occasioned by Savery's method of condensing. Their engine could be applied with advantage to raise water from mines, which Savery's was wholly incapable of effecting, its power being limited to that of the sucking-pump. Newcomen's engine, as it is generally called, made no use at all of the direct force of steam; it worked entirely by means of the vacuum; and hence it is sometimes and unjustly termed the "atmospheric engine," as its moving force is the pressure of the atmosphere. Desaguliers, who has given us the best description of Newcomen and Calley's engine, about the year 1717 or 1718, made several of these engines, in which he executed Papin's suggestion of using the safety-valve. In the same year Brighton perfected the mechanism whereby the engine itself shut and opened the valves, by which the supply of steam to the cylinder and of water to the boiler is regulated; and Smeaton subsequently made some other mechanical improvements. With these exceptions, the steam-engine continued exactly in the same state from the time of Newcomen to that of Watt, about half a century later."

The life of James Watt, the greatest of those who devoted their mechanical genius to the improvement of the steam-engine, deserves to be recorded with some degree of minuteness. He was born at Greenock, then a very insignificant place compared with what it is now, on January 19, 1736, and came of a family distinguished by its honesty, sobriety, and industry. His grandfather, who dignified himself with the title of "Professor," was a teacher of navigation and mathematics in the village of Cartsdyke, near Greenock, in which town James Watt's father carried on business as a carpenter and builder, dealing also in ship's stores, and occasionally speculating a little in foreign mercantile ventures, which did not turn out well. Watt's mother, whose maiden name was Agnes Muirhead, is described as having been a very intelligent woman, bountifully gifted with graces of person as well as of mind and heart. She lived in a somewhat superior style to her neighbors, one of whom, long after, spoke of her as "a braw,



braw woman—none like her nowadays;” at the same time mentioning (as an instance of her “brawnness,” we suppose) that on one occasion she had no fewer than “*two* lighted candles on the table at the same time!”

Watt was a very delicate child, and hence almost all his early education was given to him at home. His mother taught him reading, and his father writing and the elements of arithmetic. Very early in life he showed, as probably most children who afterward attain to eminence do, signs of those talents to which he owes his fame. He was fond of working with tools, which he speedily learned to handle with considerable dexterity, and used often to amuse his leisure-hours by drawing plans with a pencil upon paper or with a piece of chalk upon the floor. One day, while he was bending over a marble hearth, with a piece of chalk in his hand, a friend of his father said, “You ought to send that boy to a public school, and not allow him to trifle away his time at home.” “Look how my child is occupied,” was the reply, “before you condemn him.” The boy, then only six years old, was trying to solve a problem in geometry. Another often-quoted anecdote of Watt’s childhood, which has given rise to some rather absurd comments, is that on one occasion he was reproved by his aunt for his indolence at the tea-table. “James Watt,” said she, “I never saw such an idle boy as you are! Take a book, or employ yourself usefully; for the last hour you have not spoken one word, but taken off the lid of the tea-kettle and put it on again, holding now a cup and now a silver spoon over the steam, watching how it rises from the cup, and catching and counting the drops it falls into. Are you not ashamed of spending your time in that way?”\* It would be rash to conclude from this, as Arago and many writers of less repute have done, that Watt was even then meditating those mighty discoveries which have led to such great results.

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\* It may be mentioned that a story similar to this is told of Savery and Worcester.

While at school Watt by no means distinguished himself. He was looked on as a dull, stupid boy, and, being far from strong, he suffered much from the petty tyranny of his companions. When fourteen years of age he went on a visit to some relatives in Glasgow, and there developed a vein of talent not usually associated with such pursuits as those to which he afterward gave himself. His mother was entreated to take him home. "I can no longer bear the excitement in which he keeps me," said Mrs. Campbell, Watt's cousin; "I am worn out with want of sleep. Every evening, before our usual hour of retiring to rest, he adroitly contrives to engage me in conversation, then begins some striking tale, and, whether it be humorous or pathetic, the interest is so overpowering, that all the family listen to him with breathless attention; hour after hour strikes unheeded, but the next morning I feel quite exhausted. You must really take home your son." It will gratify a large and much-abused class of readers to learn that Watt, like so many other great men, was to the end of his life an inveterate novel-reader.

When he was about fifteen years of age Watt's school-education came to an end. By that time the apparent dulness which had characterized his early years had disappeared, and before he left school he had taken the lead of his class. All branches of study interested him. Before he was fifteen years old he had twice gone through with great attention S'Gravesande's "*Elements of Natural Philosophy*," he had performed many chemical experiments, and had succeeded in making an electrical machine. Nor did his scientific ardor end here. In the long, solitary walks in which he was wont to indulge he studied botany and mineralogy. Not content with these multifarious pursuits, he added anatomy to his long list of studies, and once went so far in his zeal to acquire knowledge that he was found carrying away the head of a child who had died of some uncommon disease, in order that he might dissect it.

Watt's father had originally intended that his son should pursue his own calling of a merchant. Having, however, sus-

tained several severe losses in business, and observing the strong bent of his son's mind toward mechanical pursuits, he determined to send him to Glasgow, there to learn the trade of a mathematical instrument maker. At the age of eighteen Watt accordingly set out for Glasgow, where, however, his stay was short. The mechanic with whom he was placed could teach him nothing, and Watt saw that for him to remain long under his supervision would be nothing but a waste of time. He therefore acted on the advice of Professor Dick, of Glasgow University, who advised him to proceed to London. On his arrival in the metropolis, in June, 1755, Watt found considerable difficulty in getting employment. "I have not," he writes to his father a fortnight after his arrival, "yet got a master; we have tried several, but they all make some objection or other. I find that if any of them agree with me at all, it will not be for less than a year, and even for that time they will be expecting some money." At length he placed himself with a Mr. Morgan, mathematical and nautical instrument maker, of Cornhill, to work a year for a fee of twenty guineas. During the time he was with Morgan he was chiefly employed in the preparation and adjustment of sextants, compasses, and other nautical instruments. When he had been thus engaged for about a year ill-health compelled him to leave London, and he returned to Glasgow.

By this time Watt had acquired great proficiency in his trade, and he therefore determined to begin business in Glasgow on his own account as a mathematical instrument maker. From doing so he was, however, prevented by a serious and unexpected obstacle. The Corporation of Hammermen opposed him, on the ground that he was neither the son of a burgess nor had served an apprenticeship within the borough. They, therefore, declared that he was not entitled to exercise his calling within the municipal boundaries. It fortunately so happened that Watt had attracted the favorable attention of the professors of Glasgow University by repairing some mathematical instruments belonging to it. The University authori-

ties accordingly came to his assistance, and in 1757 granted him a little room about twenty feet square within the college precincts, where he might pursue his calling unmolested by the Worshipful Corporation of Hammermen. Over the door of his little dwelling Watt put up a sign, styling himself "Mathematical Instrument Maker to the University."

For some time after commencing business in Glasgow, Watt found that he had difficulty in satisfying even his slender wants. Work came in slowly, and what he did get to do was not of a remunerative kind. However, his fame as a skilful workman soon spread abroad, and better days began to dawn on him. • He was asked to build an organ for a Masons' Lodge in Glasgow. Watt had no ear for music, but he studied musical theory with great care and thoroughness, and the organ he constructed was found to be far superior to any in Glasgow, as it embodied many useful improvements. After this Watt was frequently employed in the construction and repair of musical instruments, such as violins, guitars, etc.

Within a few years Watt became well and favorably known to many of the professors and students of the University. Among his visitors were Dr. Black, the famous chemist; Professor Simson, Dr. Dick, Dr. Moor, and occasionally Dr. Adam Smith. Of the students who visited him none was more eager for knowledge or more quick in picking it up than John Robison, afterward Dr. Robison, and Professor of Natural Philosophy at Edinburgh. Robison has himself given a pleasing account of his intercourse with Watt. "When I was as yet a young student," he says, "I had the vanity to think myself a pretty good proficient in my favorite studies of mathematical and mechanical philosophy, and, on being introduced to Watt, was mortified at finding him so much my superior. Whenever any puzzle came in the way of any of us we went to Mr. Watt. He needed only to be prompted; everything became to him the beginning of a new and serious study, and we knew that he would not quit it till he had either discovered its insignificancy or had made something of it. On one occasion



the solution of a problem seemed to require the perusal of Leupold's '*Theatrum Machinarum*,' and Watt forthwith learned German. At another time, and for a similar reason, he made himself master of Italian. When to the superiority of knowledge which every man confesses in his own line is added the *naïve* simplicity and candor of Mr. Watt's character, it is no wonder that the attachment of his acquaintances was so strong. I have seen something of the world, and am obliged to say that I never saw such another instance of general and cordial attachment to a person whom all acknowledged to be their superior. But the superiority was concealed under the most amiable candor and liberal allowance of merit to every man. Mr. Watt was the first to ascribe to the ingenuity of a friend things which were often nothing but his own surmises followed out and embodied by another. I am well entitled to say this, and I have often experienced it in my own case."

During the first years of his residence in Glasgow, Watt, not finding the claims of his business very engrossing, busied himself a good deal in making experiments with steam, aided by apothecaries' phials and a Papin's digester. As his business increased he laid the subject aside for a while; but in 1763 it was revived by a model of Newcomen's engine, which had been used in one of the classes of the University, being placed in his hands for repair. This may be described as the turning-point in Watt's fortunes. He soon put the little model into working order, and, with his usual persistency in investigating every subject to the bottom, began to consider the ways and means by which a more perfect engine could be constructed. The first and most important improvement he made on Newcomen's engine was the separate condenser, patented in 1769. "The steam in Newcomen's engine was only employed to produce a vacuum. The working power of the engine was in the down stroke, which was effected by the pressure of the air upon the piston; hence it is now usual to call it the atmospheric engine. Watt perceived that the air which followed the piston down the cylinder would cool the



latter, and that steam would be wasted in re-heating it. To effect a farther saving, he resolved 'to put an air-tight cover upon the cylinder, with a hole and stuffing-box for the piston-rod to slide through, and to admit steam above the piston, to act upon it instead of the atmosphere.' When the steam had done its duty in driving down the piston a communication was opened between the upper and lower part of the cylinder, and the same steam, distributing itself equally in both compartments, sufficed to restore equilibrium. The piston was now drawn up by the weight of the pump-gear, the steam beneath it was then condensed to leave a vacuum, and a fresh jet of steam from the boiler was let in above the piston, and forced it again to the bottom of the cylinder. From an atmospheric it had thus become a true steam-engine, and with a much greater economy of steam than when the air did half the duty. But it was not only important to keep the air from flowing down the inside of the cylinder; the air which circulated without cooled the metal and condensed a portion of the steam within. This Watt proposed to remedy by a second cylinder surrounding the first, with an interval between the two, which was to be kept full of steam. 'When once,' he says, 'the idea of separate condensation was started, all these improvements followed as corollaries in quick succession, so that in the course of one or two days the invention was thus far complete in my mind.' ”\*

We cannot here describe minutely the various beautiful contrivances by which Watt gradually brought the steam-engine to a condition approaching perfection. Through all his labors he was much troubled by the want of skilled workmen, by scarcity of capital, and by the thought that to bring his invention into practical use would require some thousands of pounds—a sum which it appeared to him impossible to raise in Glasgow, then only a small seaport, with a trade confined mainly to tobacco. “Most fortunately, however,” writes Robison, “there

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\* *Quarterly Review*, No. 208, p. 427.

was in the neighborhood such a person as he wished—Dr. Roebuck, a gentleman of very uncommon knowledge in all the branches of civil engineering, familiarly acquainted with the steam-engine, of which he employed several in his collieries, and deeply interested in this improvement. He was also well accustomed to great enterprises, not scared by difficulties, nor a niggard of expense." It appears to have been through his friend, Dr. Black, that Watt, about 1765, became acquainted with Roebuck, then carrying on iron-works at Carron, and sinking coal-mines at Borrowstoness. In 1767, when Watt had become considerably involved by incurring the expenses necessary to perfect his engine, Roebuck assumed his liabilities to the amount of £1000, and agreed to provide capital for the prosecution of his experiments, and to introduce his invention. In return for this outlay Watt agreed to assign to Roebuck two-thirds of his patent.

Having, in 1768, succeeded in constructing an engine which worked better than any of its predecessors, Watt, in August of that year, determined to take out a patent, and proceeded to London for this purpose. The patent, as already mentioned, was granted in the beginning of 1769. On his return journey from London, Watt passed through Birmingham, and there became acquainted with his future partner, Matthew Boulton, one of the most pushing and enterprising of the many active manufacturers in that great centre of industry. Boulton, with his usual acuteness, at once recognized Watt's powers, and, perceiving the great merit of his invention, offered to purchase an interest in it. No arrangement was come to then; but within a short time events happened which led to a union between Boulton and Watt, which proved in the highest degree advantageous to both. Watt had married his cousin, Miss Miller, in 1764, and was therefore obliged, while carrying on his experiments with the steam-engine, to engage at the same time in some more remunerative occupation. He therefore commenced business as a civil engineer, and at different times made surveys for a canal to unite the Forth and the Clyde; for connecting

by a canal the Monklands coal-mines with Glasgow; for the improvement of the harbors of Ayr, Greenock, and Glasgow; for a canal from Perth to Cupar, etc. All these undertakings, however, he looked on as merely "bread-winning" occupations; the perfecting of his beloved steam-engine was the object he really had at heart. Of a far from sanguine temperament, much dejected by every difficulty, and generally anticipating the worst, Watt was anything but a happy man. The state of his feelings may be gathered from the following passage in a letter he wrote in April, 1769, on hearing that a person named Moore had plagiarized his invention: "I have resolved," he says, "unless those things which I have now brought to some perfection reward me for the time and money I have lost on them, if I can resist it, to invent no more. Indeed, I am not near so capable as I once was; I find that I am not the same person that I was four years ago, when I invented the fire-engine, and foresaw, even before I made a model, almost every circumstance that has since occurred. I was at that time spurred on by the alluring prospect of placing myself above want, without being obliged to have much dealing with mankind, to whom I have always been a dupe. The necessary experience in great [machines] was wanting, in acquiring which I have met with many disappointments. I must have sunk under the burden of them if I had not been supported by the friendship of Dr. Roebuck. I have now brought the engine near a conclusion; yet I am not in idea nearer that rest I wish for than I was four years ago. However, I am resolved to do all I can to carry on this business; and if it does not thrive, I will lay aside the burden I cannot carry. Of all things in life there is nothing more foolish than inventing."

In September, 1769, Watt finished the construction of an engine on a larger scale than any he had yet attempted. It was built in an outhouse at Kinneil, Roebuck's residence, in order to secure privacy. Greatly to Watt's vexation, it turned out a very disappointing job. The condenser proved not to be tight, and the piston leaked seriously—facts which show how

much Watt must have suffered from the want of skilled workmen.

When Boulton first proposed to Watt to buy an interest in his invention, Roebuck, who had formed the highest expectations of what the engine would eventually accomplish, proposed to Boulton to allow him a share in it for the counties of Warwick, Stafford, and Derby only. To this proposal Boulton would not agree, for the reasons set forth in an interesting letter he wrote to Watt on February 17, 1769. "I was excited," he says, "by two motives to offer you my assistance, which were, love of you, and love of a money-getting, ingenious project. I presumed that your engine would require money, very accurate workmanship, and extensive correspondence, to make it turn out to the best advantage; and that the best means of keeping up the reputation, and doing the invention justice, would be to keep the executive part out of the hands of the multitude of empirical engineers, who, from ignorance, want of experience, and want of necessary convenience, would be very liable to produce bad and inaccurate workmanship, all of which deficiencies would affect the reputation of the invention. To remedy which, and to produce the most profit, my idea was to settle a manufactory near to my own, by the side of our canal, where I would erect all the conveniences necessary for the completion of engines, and from which manufactory we would serve the world with engines of all sizes. By these means, and your assistance, we would engage and instruct some excellent workmen, who (with more excellent tools than would be worth any man's while to procure for one single engine) could execute the invention twenty times cheaper than it would be otherwise executed, and with as great a difference of accuracy as there is between the blacksmith and the mathematical instrument maker. It would not be worth my while to make for these counties only; but I find it very well worth my while to work for all the world."

Boulton's bold and admirable scheme was realized almost to the letter. Roebuck's affairs became very much involved



through the failure of the Borrowstoness coal-mines, and in 1773 he transferred his entire property in Watt's patent to Boulton, in consideration of being released from a debt of £630, and receiving the first £1000 of profit from the engine. Soon after this arrangement was come to Watt entered into partnership with Boulton, a man who possessed in abundance the qualities in which Watt was most deficient. Bold, strenuous, active, pushing, of a sanguine temperament, and open and cordial manners, none could have been found better suited to be a partner to the shrinking, distrustful, desponding James Watt. At his works at Soho, near Birmingham, Boulton reigned as a sort of king. Boswell, who visited the place in 1776, says in his "Life of Johnson," "I shall never forget Mr. Boulton's expression to me while surveying the works: 'I sell here, sir, what all the world desire to have—POWER.' He had about seven hundred people at work. I contemplated him as an iron chieftain; and he seemed to be a father of his tribe. One of the men came to him complaining grievously of his landlord for having distrained his goods. 'Your landlord is in the right, Smith,' said Boulton; 'but I'll tell you what—find you a friend who will lay down one-half of your rent, and I'll lay down the other, and you shall have your goods again.'"

In the summer of 1774 Watt proceeded to Birmingham. He soon found that the skilled labor and excellent tools he found there enabled him to bring his engine much nearer to perfection than he could do in Scotland. Shortly after his arrival in Birmingham he wrote to his father: "The business I am here about has turned out rather successful; that is to say, that the fire-engine I have invented is now going, and answers much better than any other that has yet been made, and I expect that the invention will be very beneficial to me."

Reports of the efficiency of the new engine made at the Soho works soon reached the mining districts of Cornwall, and a deputation of miners was sent down to examine it. They found its excellence unquestionable; but it was sold at a high price, and it was some time before any orders came in for



engines constructed on the same model. To induce the miners to give the new invention a trial, Boulton, with characteristic enterprise, offered to be at the whole cost, provided he was allowed as royalty one-third of the value of the saving of coal effected by Watt's engine as compared to Newcomen's. These liberal terms were eagerly accepted, and soon some of the engines were introduced into Cornwall, where they created great astonishment and delight by their "velocity, violence, magnitude, and horrible noise." It was found that the saving of coal caused by their use was more than even the most sanguine could have anticipated, amounting to nearly three-fourths of the quantity formerly consumed.

In 1775 an act of Parliament was passed extending the patent to 1800. How necessary this extension was appears from the fact that till 1783 Watt and Boulton made no profit by the invention, and that about £47,000 had been invested before it proved remunerative. Even after his engine had stood the test of practical use, and had been everywhere received with favor, Watt did not allow his inventive genius to lie dormant. Between the years 1781 and 1785 he took out patents for various contrivances tending to its improvement, including the rotatory motion of the sun and planet wheels, the expansive principle of working steam, the double-action engine, the parallel motion, the smokeless furnace, and the governor. All through his active life Watt was much troubled by unscrupulous persons, who plagiarized his inventions. "We have been so beset with plagiaries," he writes on one occasion to Dr. Black, "that if I had not a very good memory of my doing it, their impudent assertions would lead me to doubt whether I was the author of any improvement on the steam-engine, and the ill-will of those we have most essentially served, whether such improvements have not been highly prejudicial to the commonwealth."

It must not be supposed that Watt's inventive faculty displayed itself only in the improvement of the steam-engine. Among other things, he contrived a machine for copying let-

ters, an instrument for measuring the specific gravity of fluids, a plan for heating buildings by steam, and a machine for drying linen. He was an accomplished chemist, and, as was abundantly proved by Lord Brougham, who discussed the question very elaborately, was the first to discover the true chemical composition of water. When a very old man he set himself to contrive a machine for copying books and statues, and succeeded so far with it as to produce some specimens of its performances, which he distributed among his friends as "the productions of a young artist just entering into his eighty-third year."

When, in 1800, the patent expired, Watt withdrew from business, resigning his shares to his two sons. In private life he was one of the most instructive and attractive of companions. Sir Walter Scott thus describes an interview he had with him when in his eighty-second year: "There were assembled about half a score of our Northern lights. Amid this company stood Mr. Watt, the man who discovered the means of multiplying our national resources to a degree perhaps beyond his own stupendous powers of calculation and combination; bringing the treasure of the abyss to the summit of the earth—giving the feeble arm of man the momentum of an Afrite—commanding manufactures to rise as the rod of the prophet produced water in the desert—affording the means of dispensing with that time and tide which wait for no man, and of sailing without that wind which defied the commands and threats of Xerxes himself. This potent commander of the elements—this abridger of time and space—this magician whose cloudy machinery has produced a change in the world, the effects of which, extraordinary as they are, are perhaps only now beginning to be felt—was not only the most profound man of science—the most successful combiner of powers and calculator of numbers as applied to practical purposes—was not only one of the most generally well-informed, but one of the kindest of human beings. There he stood, surrounded by the little band I have mentioned of Northern lit-

erati, men not less tenacious, speaking generally, of their own fame and their own opinions than the national regiments are supposed to be jealous of the high character which they have won upon service. Methinks I yet see and hear what I shall never see or hear again. In his eighty-second year, the alert, kind, benevolent old man had his attention alive to every one's question, his information at every one's command. His talents and fancy overflowed on every subject. One gentleman was a deep philologist—he talked with him on the origin of the alphabet, as if he had been coeval with Cadmus; another, a celebrated critic—you would have thought he had studied political economy and belles-lettres all his life. Of science it is unnecessary to speak—it was his own distinguished walk."

All the eminent persons who have recorded their reminiscences of Watt agree with Scott in praising the extraordinary versatility of his talents. "His accomplishments," said Brougham, at a meeting held in 1824 to make provision for the erection of a monument to Watt, "were so various, the powers of his mind were so vast, and yet of such universal application, that it were hard to say whether we should most admire the extraordinary versatility of his understanding, or the accuracy of nice research with which he could bring it to bear upon the most minute objects of investigation." "His stores of miscellaneous knowledge," writes Jeffrey, "were immense—and yet less astonishing than the command he had at all times over them. It seemed as if every subject that was casually started in conversation with him had been that which he had been last occupied in studying and exhausting; such was the copiousness, the precision, and the admirable clearness of the information which he poured out upon it without effort or hesitation. Nor was this promptitude and compass of knowledge confined in any degree to the studies connected with his ordinary pursuits. That he should have been minutely and extensively skilled in chemistry and the arts, and in most of the branches of physical science, might have been conjectured; but it could not have been inferred from his

usual occupations, and probably is not generally known, that he was curiously learned in many branches of antiquity, metaphysics, medicine, and etymology; and perfectly at home in all the details of architecture, music, and law. He was well acquainted, too, with most of the modern languages, and familiar with their most recent literature. Nor was it at all extraordinary to hear the great mechanician and engineer detailing and expounding, for hours together, the metaphysical theories of the German logicians, or criticising the measures or the matter of the German poetry."

Mrs. Schimmel-Pennineck, in her "Autobiography," has left us a striking picture of Watt in his old age. "He was," she says, "one of the most complete specimens of the melancholic temperament. His head was generally bent forward or leaning on his hand in meditation, his shoulders stooping and his chest falling in, his limbs lank and unmuscular, and his complexion sallow. His utterance was slow and unimpassioned, deep and low in tone, with a broad Scottish accent; his manners gentle, modest, and unassuming. In a company where he was not known, unless spoken to, he might have tranquilly passed the whole time in pursuing his own meditations. When he entered a room, men of letters, men of science, nay, military men, artists, ladies, even little children, thronged around him. I remember a celebrated Swedish artist having been instructed by him that rats' whiskers make the most pliant painting-brushes; ladies would appeal to him on the best means of devising grates, curing smoking chimneys, warming their houses, and obtaining fast colors. I can speak from experience of his teaching me how to make a dulcimer and improve a jew's-harp."

One of the last of the many useful services Watt rendered to society was his assisting the proprietors of the water-works in Glasgow with a plan for supplying the town with better water. Finding it necessary to adapt the pipes through which the water passed to the shifting bed of the river, Watt, taking the tail of the lobster as his model, laid down a tube of iron with flexi-



ble joints—a plan which answered completely. This was in 1811. On August 19, 1819, Watt quietly expired. In Westminster Abbey there was erected a statue in his honor from the chisel of Chantrey, bearing upon it an epitaph from the pen of Lord Brougham, which has been justly called one of the most masterly and dignified lapidary inscriptions in the English language.

As early as 1759 Robison suggested to Watt that the steam-engine might be applied to the propulsion of carriages. Watt at once took up the idea, and began to make a little model locomotive-engine, but soon abandoned the project. In his patent of 1784 he included the locomotive-engine, but does not appear to have taken any step to bring it into use. Previous to this, in 1769, a French officer, Cugnot, built a steam-carriage, which had partial success. Encouraged by this he, in 1770, constructed a second one, which is described as “an exceedingly creditable piece of work in every respect.” In 1784 Murdoch, the inventor of gas, then one of Watt’s assistants, made a working-model of a locomotive, which was capable of running at a rapid rate. In 1802 Richard Trevithick, an ingenious but unfortunate inventor, constructed a model high-pressure steam-carriage, which was patented the same year. To Trevithick the credit belongs of having been the first to apply steam-power to the haulage of loads on the railroad. From about the beginning of the seventeenth century wooden railways were used in the collieries of the North of England, in order to reduce the labor of drawing coals from the pits to the places of shipment in the neighborhood of Newcastle-on-Tyne. About 1716 it became customary to nail thin plates of malleable iron upon the surface of these wooden rails, in order to render them more durable and to lessen the draught of the horses. From this the transition to rails made entirely of iron was easy. In 1804 Trevithick contrived a locomotive which, on the railroad of the Merthyr-Tydvil colliery, in South Wales, drew as many carriages as would contain ten tons of bar iron, at the rate of five miles an hour.



This was a great achievement; but the fame of Trevithick and other inventors who lived about the same time has been quite overshadowed by that of George Stephenson, of whom it has been justly said, that "his mechanical genius was of that order that it may without exaggeration be asserted that if Watt had not previously invented the steam-engine, he was capable of achieving it. Others before him had prepared the way, others since have contributed valuable improvements in detail, but to George Stephenson unquestionably belongs the proud title of the author of the railway system. He gathered the many threads of ingenuity and enterprise, and wove them into that wide-spreading net-work which promises in its manifold extension to envelop the whole world in bonds of commerce, civilization, and peace." Stephenson was born at Wyllam, about eight miles west of Newcastle-on-Tyne, on June 9, 1781. His father was employed as fireman at the colliery there, and, though an industrious and respectable man, had a very hard battle to fight with poverty. To use a phrase of Charles Lamb's, George Stephenson was rather *dragged* up than *brought* up. Of education he had in his childhood absolutely none. As soon as he was able to run about he was set to some occupation which might help to earn his bread. "He led the horse at the plough," it has been said, "when too young to stride over the furrow." Like Watt, he very early showed the bent of his genius. "His favorite amusement," we are told, "was erecting clay engines in company with his chosen playmate, Tom Tholoway. They found the clay for their engines in the adjoining bog, and the hemlock which grew about supplied them with abundance of imaginary steam-pipes."

Stephenson's earliest wish was to have some connection with an engine, and when he had reached the age of fourteen his ambition was gratified by his being appointed assistant to his father. He had not long occupied this situation when he won golden opinions from all by his constant diligence and the knowledge of his work he displayed. A new coal-pit being opened on the Duke of Newcastle's property, Stephenson was

appointed to act as the plugman of the pumping-engine there. While in this situation he devoted himself assiduously to the study of the engine, taking it to pieces and examining its mechanism. He was thus acquiring skill in the kind of knowledge most useful to him, while as yet he knew not even the very rudiments of education. He was eighteen years of age before he learned to read, which at length he did by paying the sum of fourpence a week to get some little instruction at a night-school. By the time he was nineteen his education had so far advanced that he was able to boast of being able to write his own name.

While working as fireman Stephenson endeavored to eke out his slender pittance by putting his mechanical skill to profitable account. It is stated that he mended clocks and watches, repaired shoes, and cut out pitmen's clothes. It was while working as brakeman of an engine at Black Catterton, with a salary of eighteen shillings a week, that he managed to save his first guinea by mending the shoes of his fellow-workmen. He felt that he was "now a rich man," and consequently justified in marrying Fanny Henderson, a servant in a neighboring farm-house, to whom he had been for some time attached. This he did in his twenty-third year. Within two years after her marriage his wife died, leaving behind her a son, Robert, who afterward became the distinguished civil engineer whose name is so well known in the history of railway progress. It deserves to be recorded to the honor of George Stephenson that he resolved that his son should not want those educational facilities from which he had been debarred. "In the earlier part of my career," he once said, "when Robert was a little boy, I saw how deficient I was in education, and I made up my mind that he should not labor under the same defect, but that I would put him to a good school, and give him a liberal training. I was, however, a poor man; and how do you think I managed? I betook myself to mending my neighbors' clocks and watches at night, after my daily labor was done, and thus I procured the means of educating my son."

After the death of his wife, in 1804, Stephenson accepted an invitation to become engine-driver at a spinning-mill near Montrose. There, however, he did not long remain. At the end of a year he returned to Killingworth, and resumed his former situation as brakeman at the pit. It was while thus engaged that he had an opportunity of showing conspicuously his acquaintance with the mechanism of the steam-engine. An engine made by Smeaton, for the purpose of pumping the water from the shaft, refused to do its work. "On Saturday afternoon," writes Mr. Smiles, "Stephenson went over to the High Pit to examine the engine more carefully than he had yet done. He had been turning over the subject in his mind; and after a long examination he seemed to satisfy himself as to the cause of the failure. Kit Heppel, who was a sinker at the pit, said to him, 'Weel, George, what do you mak' o' her? Do you think you could do anything to improve her?' 'Man,' said George in reply, 'I could alter her and made her draw: in a week's time from this I could send you to the bottom.' Forthwith Heppel reported this conversation to Ralph Dods, the head viewer; and Dods, being now quite in despair, and hopeless of succeeding with the engine, determined to give George's skill a trial." Stephenson willingly agreed to attempt to "doctor" the engine, and he thoroughly succeeded. Within a week after he entered on his task the engine cleared the pit of water. For his services Stephenson was rewarded by a present of ten pounds, and by being appointed engineman to the Killingworth engine. His fame as an "engine-doctor" soon spread abroad; and, in 1812, the engine-wright at Killingworth having been accidentally killed, Stephenson was appointed to succeed him at a salary of one hundred pounds a year and the use of a horse.

All the time he could spare from the duties of his new and congenial situation Stephenson devoted to the farther study of the steam-engine, especially with a view to bring into use a locomotive. The few locomotives then at work he went to see, and examined carefully. After inspecting one at work at

Wylam he declared that "he could make a better engine—one that would draw steadier and work more cheaply and effectively," Lord Ravensworth, the principal partner of the Killingworth collieries, advanced the money for the purpose of enabling him to do so; and, on the Killingworth railroad, on July 25, 1814, an engine, constructed under the superintendence of George Stephenson, succeeded in drawing up a slight ascent eight loaded carriages, weighing about twenty tons, at the rate of four miles an hour. "The first locomotive I made," said Stephenson, speaking thirty-one years after the above date, "was at Killingworth Colliery, and with Lord Ravensworth's money. Yes; Lord Ravensworth and Company were the first parties that would intrust me with money to make a locomotive-engine. That engine was made thirty-two years ago, and we called it 'My Lord.' I said to my friends there was no limit to the speed of such an engine, provided the works could be made to stand."

For some years Stephenson remained at Killingworth, improving the rail and the engine to the best of his ability. In 1819 the owners of the Hetton Colliery, in Durham, having decided to have their wagon-way constructed for locomotive-engines, invited him to act as their engineer. On November 18, 1822, he opened a line of railway, about eight miles in length, from the Hetton Colliery to the shipping-place on the Wear. On it five locomotives of his design were used. They drew a train of seventeen coal-cars, weighing sixty-four tons, at the rate of four miles an hour. The people of the neighborhood, who looked on the new machines with wonder and admiration, called them "the iron horses."

In 1821 Edward Pease, of Darlington, and some other local gentlemen, obtained an act of Parliament authorizing them "to make a railway, or tramroad, from Stockton to Wilton Park Colliery (by Darlington)." At the time when the act was obtained nothing had been arranged as to how the railway should be worked. In the hope of inducing Pease to adopt the locomotive, Stephenson, in 1821, paid a visit to him at Darlington.



Pease was somewhat doubtful at first, but Stephenson's arguments were powerful, and, in 1822, Pease, along with his friend Thomas Richardson, visited Killingworth, to see what the locomotive could actually accomplish. "Stephenson," writes Mr. Smiles, "soon had it brought out, made the gentlemen mount it, and showed them its paces. Harnessing it to a train of loaded wagons, he ran it along the railroad, and so thoroughly satisfied his visitors of its powers and capabilities, that from that day Edward Pease was a declared supporter of the locomotive-engine. In preparing, in 1823, the Amended Stockton and Darlington Act, at Mr. Stephenson's urgent request, Mr. Pease had a clause inserted taking power to work the railway by means of locomotive-engines, and to employ them for the haulage of passengers as well as of merchandise; and Mr. Pease gave a farther and still stronger proof of his conviction as to the practical value of the locomotive by entering into a partnership with Mr. Stephenson in the following year, for the establishment of a locomotive foundery and manufactory in the town of Newcastle—the northern centre of the English railroad system. The second Stockton and Darlington Act was obtained in the session of 1823, not, however, without opposition. Mr. Stephenson was regularly appointed the company's engineer, at a salary of £300 per annum, and he forthwith removed his family from Killingworth to Darlington."

On September 27, 1825, the Stockton and Darlington Railway was opened for traffic. The following account of the occasion, from the *Times* of October 4, 1825, will be read with interest: "A train of carriages was attached to a locomotive-engine of the most improved construction, and built by Mr. George Stephenson, in the following order: (1) Locomotive-engine, with the engineer and assistants; (2) tender, with coals and water; next, six wagons loaded with coal and flour; then an elegant covered coach, with the committee and other proprietors of the railway; then twenty-one wagons fitted up on the occasion for passengers; and, last of all, six wagons loaded with coals, making altogether a train of thirty-eight carriages,



exclusive of the engine and tender. Tickets were distributed to the number of nearly three hundred, for those whom it was intended should occupy the coach and wagons; but such was the pressure and crowd, that both loaded and empty carriages were instantly filled with passengers. The signal being given, the engine started off with this immense train of carriages. In some parts the speed was frequently twelve miles per hour, and in one place, for a short distance, near Darlington, fifteen miles per hour; and at that time the number of passengers was counted to four hundred and fifty, which, together with the coals, merchandise, and carriages, would amount to nearly ninety tons! After some little delay in arranging the procession, the engine, with her load, arrived at Darlington, a distance of eight miles and three-quarters, in sixty-five minutes, exclusive of stops, averaging about eight miles an hour. The engine arrived at Stockton in three hours and seven minutes after leaving Darlington, including stops, the distance being nearly twelve miles, which is at the rate of four miles an hour, and upon the level part of the railway the number of passengers in the wagons was counted about five hundred and fifty, and several more clung to the carriages on each side, so that the whole number could not be less than six hundred."

Though the speed attained was not very great, the practicability of travelling by railway was demonstrated, and that was the great point. At a dinner given by the delighted proprietors, one of the share-holders said that "he considered that communication by means of railways had been fully established by the experiment of to-day;" and his statement met with enthusiastic approval from all present. The experience of a few years showed that even the most sanguine had greatly under-estimated the success of the line. It was calculated that 10,000 tons of coal a year would be sent by it to Stockton. Instead of that, the quantity in a short time exceeded 500,000 tons. We may here mention, that the fiftieth anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway was celebrated with great rejoicings in South Durham on September 27, 1875. At a

jubilee banquet held on this occasion, Mr. Moore, the chairman of the London and North-western Railway Company, in responding to the toast of "The Railways of the World," said, "Although railways have done great things during the last fifty years, a half-century in the history of an invention was as nothing. He ventured to predict that in the next fifty we should see greater things than any which have yet been witnessed." More than fifty years before this prophecy was made, George Stephenson had said, "The time is coming when it will be cheaper for a working-man to travel on a railway than to walk on foot." If Mr. Moore's prediction proves as correct as George Stephenson's, great things may be looked for in the course of the next forty years.

As early as 1821 a line of railway, to be worked by horses, had been projected between Liverpool and Manchester. The opposition was so powerful that the scheme had to be given up, as was also a similar plan in 1823. In 1824, however, the idea was revived; and the fame of Stephenson's locomotive at Killingworth having by this time become tolerably wide-spread, the promoters determined to send a deputation there to examine its working. They were highly satisfied with what they saw, and engaged Stephenson as engineer to lay out the line. The bill for the railway went into committee of the House of Commons on March 21, 1825. The opposition it had to face was extremely powerful. Nearly all the land-owners were opposed to it; so, of course, were the canal companies, who feared its introduction would ruin them; and a large portion of the public looked on the "iron horse" with fear and distrust. "When I went to Liverpool," writes Stephenson, "to plan a line from thence to Manchester, I pledged myself to the directors to attain a speed of ten miles an hour. I said I had no doubt that the locomotive might be made to go much faster, but that we had better be moderate at the beginning. The directors said I was quite right; for that if, when they went to Parliament, I talked of going at a greater rate than ten miles an hour, I should put a cross upon the concern. It was not an

easy task for me to keep the engine down to ten miles an hour, but it must be done, and I did my best. I had to place myself in that most unpleasant of all positions—the witness-box of a Parliamentary committee. I was not long in it before I began to wish for a hole to creep out at. I could not find words to satisfy either the committee or myself. I was subjected to the cross-examination of eight or ten barristers, purposely, as far as possible, to bewilder me. Some member of the committee asked if I was a foreigner, and another hinted that I was mad. But I put up with every rebuff, and went on with my plans, determined not to be put down.” It was during his examination before the committee that Stephenson, when asked, “Suppose, now, one of your engines to be going at the rate of nine or ten miles an hour, and that a cow were to stray upon the line, and get in the way of the engine, would not that be a very awkward circumstance?” replied, “Yes, *very* awkward—for the *coo*.” In the course of the same examination, when asked if men and animals would not be frightened by the red-hot smoke-pipe, he answered, “But how would they know that it was not *painted*?”—a query to which, so far as we aware, no reply was attempted.

It was not till after many rebuffs and vexations that the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Bill was got through Parliament. The objections to this particular line, and to railways generally, were of a kind that appears ridiculous now, but which doubtless appeared very weighty to those who lived at the commencement of the railway era. The privacy with which an English gentleman loved to surround his ancestral domains would, said the opponents of the new means of locomotion, be rudely broken up. “How,” indignantly asked one worthy baronet, “would any person like to see a railway under his parlor window?” “What was to be done,” asked another gentleman, in a similar strain, “with all those who have advanced money in making and repairing turnpike-roads? What with those who may still wish to travel in their own or hired carriages, after the fashion of their forefathers? What

was to become of coach-makers, and harness-makers, coach-masters, coachmen, inn-keepers, horse-breeders, and horse-dealers? The beauty and comfort of country gentlemen's estates would be destroyed by it. Was the House aware of the smoke and the noise, the hiss and the whirl, which locomotive-engines, passing at the rate of ten or twelve miles an hour, would occasion? Neither the cattle ploughing in the fields nor grazing in the meadows could behold them without dismay. Leaseholders and tenants, agriculturists and dairymen, would all be in arms. Iron would be raised in price a hundred per cent., or, more probably, it would be exhausted altogether. The railway would be the greatest nuisance, the most complete disturbance of quiet and comfort in all parts of the kingdom, that the ingenuity of man could invent." Nor did the long list of complaints and grievances end here. It was felt that, if the railway system were widely introduced, a serious blow would be given to caste privilege. His Grace the Duke, instead of being conveyed from place to place in the ponderous family-coach, drawn by four horses, and attended by a great crowd of flunkies, would have to take his seat, like an ordinary mortal, in a well-filled railway-carriage, where, perchance, he would be compelled to sit opposite to the object of his special aversion, Mr. Gatherquick, the wealthy manufacturer. Again, the complaint was common (and to this day one may occasionally hear it repeated by some easy-going old people) about the great inconvenience that would be caused by trains keeping exactly to the advertised hour of starting. "How annoying for family parties to be bound to a minute!" It was, as a writer in the *Times* recently remarked, a regular thing in those days to keep the carriage-and-four a whole hour waiting at the door, till every room of the house had been gone through several times, to see that nothing was left behind. Certain alarmists did their best to strengthen the feeling against railways by dark and terrible pictures of what would happen if the locomotive was turned loose on the country. A runaway horse generally contrived to do a good deal of mischief; what would not a run-



away locomotive do? No obstruction could stand against it. It would dash through houses, and perhaps half a town might be destroyed before its mad career was stopped.

In spite of all these powerful arguments against railways the bill for the Manchester and Liverpool Railway got through Parliament, and the line was finally built, with Stephenson as principal engineer, at a salary of £1000 per annum. It was while laying down the line between Manchester and Liverpool that Stephenson achieved one of the greatest successes of his life. Part of the route he had chosen lay across Chatmoss, a dreary, unfathomable deposit of peat, extending over an area of twelve square miles. Almost all who heard of the attempt to make a railroad over this swamp ridiculed the project, and even Stephenson's best friends thought that in this case he had not shown his usual good-sense. Events, however, proved that he had not over-estimated his own resources. In a letter dated November 1, 1828, he gives the following account of how he executed his task, which was commenced in June, 1826: "Chatmoss," he says, "extends four miles on the line of road; on each side of the moss the land lies low; on the western side an embankment is formed of moss nearly a mile in length, and varying from ten to twenty feet in height, which stands extremely well; the slopes of this embankment are a little more upright than the angle of forty-five, which, from our experience, stands better than if more inclined. It is now covered with a material from two to three feet thick, consisting of sand and gravel. The permanent road is laid upon this covering, and remains very firm; the quantity of excavations made in the moss to form the embankments adjoining amount to 520,000 cubic yards. That portion of the moss, about three-quarters of a mile from the western edge, called the 'flow-moss,' from its extreme softness, is also covered with sand and gravel; underneath I have laid hurdles thickly interwoven with twisted heath, which form a platform for the covering. Two years ago a person was not able to walk over this portion of the moss except in the driest weather; at present we have horses travel-



ling on it with loads of from six to eight tons." In short, Stephenson adopted the bold yet simple expedient of making a road-bed of materials lighter than the substance composing the bog, and thus forming a floating railroad. The plan succeeded perfectly, and the work it involved cost much less than could have been anticipated. An engineer of the name of Giles had estimated that the formation of the road across Chatmoss would cost £270,000; in reality it cost only £28,000.

Even after the line had been completed the directors were in doubt as to how it should be worked. They were inundated with all sorts of projects, of which Mr. Booth, in his pamphlet, "An Account of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway," gives an amusing description. "Communications were received from all classes, each recommending an improved power, or an improved carriage; from professors of philosophy down to the humblest mechanic, all were zealous in their proffers of assistance. England, America, and the Continent were alike tributary. Every element and almost every substance was brought into requisition and made subservient to the great work. The friction of carriages was to be reduced so low that a silk thread would draw them, and the power to be applied was so vast as to rend a cable asunder. Hydrogen gas and high-pressure steam; columns of water and columns of mercury; a hundred atmospheres and a perfect vacuum; machines working in a circle without fire or steam, generating power at the one end and giving it forth at the other; carriages that conveyed every one its own railway; wheels within wheels to multiply speed without diminishing power, with every complication of balancing and countervailing forces, to the *ne plus ultra* of perpetual motion." Among all the crowd of projectors, Stephenson was the only one who pressed on the directors the claims of the locomotive-engine. Owing to his constant solicitation, the directors at length determined to send Mr. James Walker, a London engineer, and Mr. Rastrick, a Northern engineer, to Darlington, to examine the working of the engine there, so as to be able to give an opinion on the comparative merits of the

locomotive and the stationary engine. They reported that, "considering the question in every point of view—taking the two lines of road as now forming, and having reference to economy, despatch, safety, and convenience—our opinion is that, if it be resolved to make the Liverpool and Manchester Railway complete at once, so as to accommodate the traffic or a quantity approaching to it, the stationary reciprocating system was the best." This report was naturally a heavy blow to George Stephenson, but he was not discomfited. He pledged himself to the directors that, if time were given him, he would construct an engine that would satisfy their requirements, and prove itself capable of working heavy loads along the railway with speed, regularity, and safety. Mainly through the influence of Mr. Harrison, one of their members, the directors came to a wise resolution. They determined to offer a prize of £500 for a locomotive that should satisfy certain prescribed conditions. These conditions were as follows:

1. The engine must consume its own smoke.
2. The engine, if of six tons weight, must be able to draw after it, day by day, twenty tons weight (including the tender and water-tank) at ten miles an hour, with a pressure of steam on the boiler not exceeding fifty pounds on the square inch.
3. The boiler must have two safety-valves, neither of which must be fastened down, and one of them completely out of the control of the engineman.
4. The engine and boiler must be supported on springs, and rest on six wheels, the height of the whole not exceeding fifteen feet to the top of the chimney.
5. The engine, with water, must not weigh more than six tons; but an engine of less weight would be preferred, on its drawing a proportionate load behind it; if of only four and a half tons, then it might be put on only four wheels. The company to be at liberty to test the boiler, etc., by a pressure of one hundred and fifty pounds to the square inch.
6. A mercurial gauge must be affixed to the machine, showing the steam-pressure above forty-five pounds to the square inch.

7. The engine must be delivered, complete and ready for trial, at the Liverpool end of the railway, not later than October 1, 1829.

8. The price of the engine must not exceed £550.

On the day of the trial, which was deferred to October 6, four engines presented themselves. These were the "Novelty," constructed by Messrs. Braithwaite & Ericsson; the "Rocket," built from George Stephenson's plans, by Robert Stephenson & Co., at Newcastle-on-Tyne; the "Sanspareil," built under the direction of Hackworth, one of Stephenson's earlier foremen; and the "Perseverance," built by Burstall. The "Perseverance" could not attain the specified rate of speed, and was withdrawn, leaving the other three engines to contest the field. Of these the "Novelty" is said to have been the general favorite, owing to its neat appearance, Stephenson's engine having few, if any, backers among the spectators. The place of trial was a level piece of rail, a mile and a half in length, near Rainhill, over which the engines were to travel ten times backward and forward, between stations erected at each end of the course. The "Sanspareil" had passed only eight times between the stations when its machinery failed; the boiler of the "Novelty" burst after it had twice passed the stations, and the "Rocket" was thus left alone on the course. It performed the whole thirty miles of the journey twice; the first time in two hours, fourteen minutes, eight seconds; the second time in two hours, six minutes, and forty-nine seconds. Of course it won the prize, and thus ushered in "the greatest mechanical revolution effected since the invention of the steam-engine by Watt." The "Rocket," it may be mentioned, remained on the line till 1837, when it was sold, and set at work by the purchasers on the Midgeholme Railway, near Carlisle. It is now in the Patent Museum, at South Kensington.

After the triumph of the "Rocket" no hesitation was felt as to how the Liverpool and Manchester line should be worked. It was formally opened for traffic on September 15, 1830. A numerous and brilliant assemblage, including the Duke of Wel-

lington, Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Huskisson, M.P., Lord Brougham, and many other eminent personages, was present to do honor to the occasion. There had been built for the line, by Robert Stephenson & Co., seven locomotives besides the "Rocket," and a large number of carriages. These were all brought out in procession, the "Northumbria" taking the lead, and drawing a splendid carriage, in which were the "Iron Duke," Sir Robert Peel, and other distinguished visitors. Each of the other locomotives drew four carriages, thus forming eight distinct trains, conveying altogether six hundred persons. These made their way from Liverpool to Manchester amid the applause and wonder of crowds of people who had gathered along the line to witness the extraordinary spectacle; and ran at times, on smooth road, at the rate of twenty to twenty-five miles an hour.

The joy attending the successful opening of the line was marred by a sad accident—the precursor of many to follow. At Packhurst, seventeen miles from Liverpool, the trains stopped to take in water for the boilers. It was then arranged that the other engines and carriages should shunt and pass the train drawn by the "Northumbria," in order that the Duke of Wellington might see the procession. Several gentlemen alighted, and among them Mr. Huskisson, who went to shake hands with the Duke. As they were standing on the main line the alarm suddenly arose that the "Rocket" was rapidly approaching. Mr. Huskisson became flurried; and before the driver of the "Rocket" could stop his engine it knocked down the unfortunate gentleman, and passed over his leg and thigh, causing injuries of which he died the same night. Immediately after the accident he was placed on the "Northumbria" and removed to Eccles, a distance of fifteen miles, in twenty-five minutes. It shows how little was at this time understood as to the speed at which railway journeys might be accomplished, to find Brougham writing to Macvey Napier, on September 16, the day after the accident: "I have come to Liverpool only to see a tragedy. Poor Huskisson is either dead or must die before to-morrow. He has been killed by a steam-carriage. The



folly of seven hundred people going fifteen miles an hour, in six carriages on a narrow road, exceeds belief. But they have paid a dear price.”\*

The news of the accident, and the statement of the speed of the engine which conveyed the wounded man to his residence, quickly spread through England and Europe, and many speculators reaped a rich harvest by feeding the mania for establishing railways everywhere, which by-and-by arose. The Liverpool and Manchester line had not been long in existence ere its success was such as to gratify the most sanguine hopes of its promoters. Within fourteen days the passengers amounted to eight hundred a day, and immediately after to twelve hundred. The journey, instead of occupying two hours, was done in an hour and a half. “Thus,” it has been said, “in a few months was produced a new and effective system of communication,

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\* In a speech delivered after the opening of the railway, Brougham thus referred to that great event, and to the melancholy tragedy by which it was darkened: “When I saw the difficulties of space and time, as it were, overcome; when I beheld a kind of miracle exhibited before my astonished eyes; when I surveyed ‘mosses’ pierced through, on which it was hardly possible for man or beast to plant the sole of the foot, now covered with a road, and bearing heavy wagons, laden not only with innumerable passengers, but with merchandise of the largest bulk and heaviest weight; when I saw valleys made practicable by the bridges of ample height and length which spanned them; saw the steam-railway traversing the surface of the water at a distance of sixty or seventy feet perpendicular height; saw the rocks excavated, and the gigantic power of man penetrating through miles of the solid mass, and gaining a great, a lasting, an almost perennial conquest over the power of nature by his strength and industry—when I contemplated all this, was it possible for me to avoid the reflection which crowded my mind?—not in praise of man’s great success, not in admiration of the genius and perseverance he had displayed, or even of the courage he had shown in setting himself against the obstacles that matter opposed to his course—no! but the melancholy reflection that all these prodigious efforts of the human race, so fruitful of praise, but so much more fruitful of lasting blessings to mankind, have forced a tear from my eye, by that unhappy casualty which deprived me of a friend and you of a representative.”



highly important to the interests of a mercantile community, and so extraordinary and complete as to form an era in national improvements, and an epoch in mechanical science." The line, which was built in the hope of securing four hundred passengers per day, almost immediately averaged 14,200, and in five years 500,000 passengers passed over it per annum.

The most important railway formed after the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester line was one from Birmingham to London. The proposal was first made in 1830; after three years of litigation and agitation, an act of Parliament authorizing it was obtained; on June 1, 1834, the first sod of the line was cut; and in September, 1838, the railway was opened. This was the first line directly connected with the metropolis. In the first instance trains were worked between Euston Square and Camden Town (there being a steep incline) by means of stationary engines and ropes. The machinery consisted of 1600 feet of rope six inches in circumference, and two engines; the total cost of which was £25,000. This somewhat primitive apparatus was given up in 1844.

After 1830 lines began to increase and multiply. With nearly all the principal early railway undertakings either George Stephenson or his son Robert was connected. Among Robert's greater achievements may be mentioned the high-level bridge over the Tyne at Newcastle, and the Britannia and Conway tubular bridges. As old age came on, George Stephenson gradually surrendered his business to his son, and finally retired to Tapton House, an estate in Derbyshire, near the Midland Railway, where he busied himself in horticulture and in farming, and in attending to the wants of the numerous rabbits, dogs, and birds who surrounded him. While thus pleasantly passing the closing years of his busy life, he used to be fond of recalling the hardships of his youth. "Why, madam," he once said, in reply to a lady, "they used to call me George Stephenson—I am now George Stephenson, Esquire, of Tapton House, near Chesterfield. I have dined with princes and princesses, and I have dined off a red-herring in a hedge-bot-

tom." On August 12, 1848, at the not very advanced age of sixty-seven, George Stephenson died of an intermittent fever, contracted amid the noxious atmosphere of one of his forcing-houses.

Few men have died so widely regretted. By his workpeople, to whom he had ever shown the greatest consideration, he was lamented as a personal friend. His simplicity of character, his straightforwardness, his genuine kindness of heart had, long before his death, won over to his side those who had formerly been his most bitter opponents. The great public boon conferred by the railway system was, ere 1848, realized by all classes, and all classes accordingly combined to do honor to its originator. "He has given," said the obituary notice of Stephenson in the *Civil Engineer*, "the engineers of England a European name; he has opened for them a new field of employment at home, a wider field of honor and wealth abroad, and they owe him heartfelt thanks." "Tracing the progress of railways," said a minute of the London and North-western Railway directors, "they found Mr. Stephenson foremost in urging forward the great railway movement; earning and maintaining his title to be considered, before any other man, the author of that universal system of locomotion which has effected such mighty results throughout the civilized world." "He has left a memory that princes might be proud of," said the directors of the Midland Railway, "and the most distinguished man living would be glad to exchange his fame for that which will surround the name of George Stephenson."

After his death many tributes of respect were paid to the memory of George Stephenson. Statues of him were erected at Liverpool, London, and Newcastle. On October 17, 1877, the foundation-stone of a Stephenson Memorial Hall, to cost about £11,000, was laid by the Marquis of Hartington at Chesterfield, Derbyshire. At a banquet which followed the ceremony one of Stephenson's old associates remarked, "George Stephenson was heard to say he never was beaten but once in his life, and that was in trying to effect a marriage between

his maid-servant and his stable-man." On June 9, 1881, the centenary of Stephenson's birth was celebrated with due honor in various parts of the kingdom and on the Continent. Particularly, of course, was this the case in the localities more especially identified with his name. The inhabitants of nearly every town in the counties of Durham and Northumberland kept holiday. Newcastle-on-Tyne especially was thronged with visitors and holiday-makers from morning till night. At an early hour in the morning a public breakfast was held, under the presidency of Mr. Joseph Cowen, M.P., when a Stephenson Scholarship Fund was established. The scholarships will be of a threefold character: the Stephenson University Exhibition, open to any candidate in the counties of Northumberland and Durham under twenty-one years of age; the Stephenson Engineering Exhibition, open to any candidate of sufficient merit, not more than nineteen years of age, attending any science school or class in Northumberland or Durham; and the Stephenson Science and Art Scholarship, open to any scholars from the public elementary schools of Northumberland and Durham who have passed the sixth standard. It is proposed to establish three of these latter scholarships for the children of agriculturists, three for the children of miners, and four for the children of mechanics and engineers. In addition to this memorial of the day, it is intended to raise £20,000 to erect a new building for the Newcastle School of Physical Science.

At the Crystal Palace, London, the occasion of the Stephenson Centenary was celebrated by an exhibition of railway appliances, the proceeds being added to the funds of the Railway Orphanage at Derby. At Rome the event was celebrated in a manner most gratifying to all Englishmen. The papers contained eulogistic notices of Stephenson's career, and the benefits which his talents and labors had conferred on mankind, and at the railway-station a commemorative tablet, placed in a most conspicuous situation, and erected at the expense of the employés, was uncovered. The tablet bore this inscription: "In this Rome, from whence wondrous roads proceed to the

empire of the world, the employés of the Roman railways, on the 9th of June, 1881, worthily commemorated the centenary of George Stephenson, who opened still more wondrous roads to the brotherhood of the nations, and whose virtues, inspiring to great works, have left an undying example."

After all, Stephenson's best and most enduring monument is the great railway system which, since the little Stockton and Darlington Railroad was opened, has penetrated almost every corner of the land. In the year 1843 there were but 1775 miles of railway opened in England and Wales; in 1877 the mileage had risen to 12,113. In 1845 the number of passengers was 33,791,253; in 1877 (not including season-ticket holders), 551,553,000. In the year 1854 the paid-up capital in connection with the railways of Great Britain and Ireland was £286,068,794; in 1877 it stood at £673,759,000. The net receipts of the lines, which in 1854 were £11,009,519, had risen in 1877 to £29,135,000. For the years 1847-'49 it was calculated that, out of 4,782,188 travellers by railway, one person was killed from causes beyond his own control; for 1856-'59, one in 8,708,411; for 1868, one in 12,491,170; so that, with an increase in mileage, there has also been secured a greater degree of safety in travelling.\* In the course of six

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\* These statistics are derived from a paper in the *Times* of June 8, 1881. It may interest many to learn something about the history of railway-tickets. For the following particulars we are mainly indebted to an article in *Chambers's Journal* for September, 1876. In the infancy of steam-traffic passengers paid their fares to the clerk, and walked upon the station platform with their friends until the train arrived; were then conveyed to their destinations, and left the railway without giving any proof to the officials of the station, when they disembarked, that they had paid their fare at the point of departure. There was, therefore, no check either upon the clerk who received the money or upon the passengers who paid it. The system now in use was invented about forty-five years ago by Thomas Edmonson, who was then employed at a station on the Newcastle and Carlisle line. The tickets he issued were of about the same size as those now used, but his arrangements for printing them were of the most primitive description. In fact, a few types, fastened together in a



hundred million railway journeys made in the United Kingdom in 1880 only 143 passengers, or one in twenty millions, were killed, and 1613, or three in two millions, injured. Unfortunately, it is the railway servants, not the passengers, who suffer most by these accidents. Of these 546 were killed and 2080 were injured in the twelve months.

Long before the locomotive-engine was thought of, the application of steam to the propulsion of vessels had been experimented on. As early as 1543 Blasco de Garay is said to have shown in the harbor of Barcelona, Spain, a vessel of 200 tons burden, moved by paddle-wheels, one part of which is stated to have been a "vessel of boiling water," which the spectators were not allowed to examine closely. In an anonymous English pamphlet, published in 1651, and supposed to have been written by the Marquis of Worcester, "an indefinite reference to what may probably have been the steam-engine is made, and it is there stated to be capable of successful application to propelling boats." In 1690 Papin proposed to use his engine to drive paddle-wheels and propel vessels; and in 1707 he applied the steam-engine to driving a model boat on the Fulda, at Cassel. In the Royal Library at Hanover is preserved a letter of Leibnitz's, dated July 13, 1707, of which the translation runs as follows: "Dionysius Papin, Counsellor and Physician

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case about the size of a nail-brush, formed his sole apparatus. The name of the station to which the passenger was going was *written* upon the ticket at the time of issue. This system, primitive as it was, grew and flourished till it became the parent of the present one. At length the inventor found that it would be desirable to devote himself entirely to the development of the new industry, and by degrees a business arose which became one of the largest of its kind in the world. Another firm, very largely engaged in ticket-printing, is that of Sir Sydney Waterlow & Sons, London, who employ very ingenious machinery to assist them in this somewhat difficult work. They are said to send out about 650,000,000 tickets annually. It is rather singular that England, the first country where the railway system was introduced, should also have been the first country to use railway-tickets. From English manufactories the railways of nearly the whole world are, we believe, supplied with tickets.



to his Royal Highness the Elector of Cassel, also Professor of Mathematics at Marburg, is about to despatch a vessel of singular construction down the river Weser to Bremen. As he learns that all ships coming from Cassel, or any point on the Fulda, are not permitted to enter the Weser, but are required to unload at Münden, and as he anticipates some difficulty, although these vessels have a different object, his own not being intended for freight, he begs most humbly that a gracious order be granted that his ship may be allowed to pass unmolested through the Electoral domain; which petition I most humbly support." The petition was rejected, and Papin's endeavors to introduce steam navigation came to nothing. A mob of boatmen, who thought the new invention foreboded the ruin of their business, attacked his vessel by night and utterly destroyed it.

In 1736 Jonathan Hulls, an Englishman, took out a patent for the use of a steam-engine for ship-propulsion; but it is not known for certain that he ever put his invention to the test of practical use. In 1782 the Marquis de Jouffroy constructed a steamboat of considerable size, which navigated the Saone for some time. It is to America, however, with its numerous large navigable rivers, that we have to turn for the story of the most important early attempts at steam navigation. There, about 1783, experiments began to be made by Fitch and Rumsey. The latter, in 1786, succeeded in driving a boat at the rate of four miles an hour against the current of the Potomac, in presence of General Washington. The former, who in the course of his experiments incurred many vexations and losses, succeeded in constructing a steamboat which was capable of going at the rate of seven miles an hour, and which, in 1780, was used as a passenger-boat between Philadelphia and Burlington, etc. Alluding to his misfortunes, Fitch would often remark, "The day will come when some more powerful man will get fame and riches from my invention; but no one will believe that poor John Fitch can do anything worthy of attention."

In February, 1787, Patrick Miller, of Dalswinton, near Dumfries, published in a pamphlet a description and drawings of a

“triple tug-vessel to be moved on the water with wheels,” of his own invention; and suggested that “the power of a steam-engine might be applied to such wheels, so as to give them a quicker motion, and thus increase that of the ship.” In his pamphlet Miller announced that “in the course of this summer I intend to make the experiment.” The promise was fulfilled. A small engine having four cylinders of brass was prepared, under the superintendence of James Taylor, tutor in Mr. Miller’s family, and Mr. William Symington, a young man of great mechanical genius, and fitted on board a double boat, with a paddle-wheel in the interspace. Its powers were tried on a small lake on Miller’s property on October 14, 1788, in presence of a large crowd of spectators. The following account of the experimental trip of the first British steamship, from the *Scots Magazine* for November, 1788, may not be without interest:

“*Dumfries, October 21.*—On the 14th inst. a boat was put in motion by a steam-engine, upon Mr. Miller of Dalswinton’s piece of water at this place. That gentleman’s improvements in naval architecture are well known to the public; and for some time past his attention has been turned to the application of the steam-engine to the purposes of navigation. He has now accomplished, and evidently shown to the world, the practicability of this, by executing it upon a small scale. A vessel, twenty-five feet long and seven broad, was, on the above date, driven with two wheels by a small engine. It answered Mr. Miller’s expectations fully, and afforded great pleasure to the spectators present. The success of this experiment is no small accession to the public; its utility on canals and all other navigations points it out to be of the greatest advantage, not only to this island, but to many other nations of the world. This improvement holds no inconsiderable rank among the inventions of modern times; and, added to his other improvements, bespeaks how much Mr. Miller deserves of the public. The engine used is Mr. Symington’s patent engine. The method of converting the reciprocating motion of the engine into the

rotatory one of the wheels is particularly elegant. It is, in fact, a thing new in mechanics, and which the world owes to Mr. Symington's ingenuity."

After repeated satisfactory trials, the engine was removed from the boat, and, it is said, was kept for many years as a trophy in Mr. Miller's library. Steam-navigation having been thus successfully attempted on a small scale, Miller determined to try it on a large scale, and accordingly commissioned Symington to construct at the Carron Iron Works an engine of about twelve horse-power; that is, about twelve times the power of the former engine. This engine, when completed, was mounted in a large vessel; and, in the end of 1789, was tried on the Forth and Clyde Canal. On the first trial the paddle-wheels proved too weak, and broke down. They were replaced by stronger ones; and, on its second trial, the boat attained the speed of seven miles an hour. The vessel, however, being far too light for a steamboat, was soon dismantled, and Miller, who had spent over £30,000 in making experiments in steam-navigation, becoming tired of the constant vexations and disappointments to which he found himself subjected, abandoned altogether the project of introducing steam-vessels just when success seemed to be at hand.

Among those who had taken great interest in the experiments of Miller was Thomas, Lord Dundas of Kerse. He was one of the chief share-holders of the Clyde and Forth Canal, where he hoped to introduce the new means of locomotion. Meeting in 1800 with Symington, he engaged him to continue his experiments, and furnished all the required capital, about £7000. Symington proceeded to work, and in 1803 completed a steam-vessel, which he named the *Charlotte Dundas*. It was tried on March 28 of that year, and, so far as its sailing qualities went, was completely successful; but it was alleged that the action of its paddle-wheels damaged the banks of the canal—a charge which had also been made against Miller's model boat. For this reason it was agreed by a majority of the canal-proprietors to prohibit its use.

In the mean time attempts at steam-navigation had been making in America by Stevens, Livingston, Read, and others. To Livingston, in 1798, the Legislature of New York granted the exclusive right of steam-navigation in the waters of the State for a period of twenty years, provided he should succeed, within a year, in producing a boat that should steam four miles an hour. This condition Livingston did not succeed in fulfilling; but in 1803 he procured the enactment of the law in favor of Robert Fulton and himself. Fulton, who was of Irish descent, was born in Little Britain, Pennsylvania, in 1765. He early displayed considerable aptitude for drawing, and in 1786 came to England, where he was for a time the pupil of West, the historical painter. About 1793 he gave up the fine arts for the mechanical, and became a civil engineer. In 1797 he went to Paris, where he busied himself for a time in experimenting with submarine torpedoes and torpedo-boats. In 1801, it is asserted (the fact is denied by many of Fulton's countrymen), he visited Scotland and examined the *Charlotte Dundas*, of the machinery of which he obtained drawings. After having, along with Livingston, attempted, not very successfully, to introduce steam-navigation on the Seine, he returned to America with one of Boulton & Watt's engines of twenty horse-power, about the end of 1806. Along with Livingston, who had also by this time returned to America, Fulton set about the construction of a steamer of larger dimensions than had yet been attempted. The result was the *Clermont*, which in August, 1807, made the voyage from New York to Albany, a distance of 150 miles, in thirty-two hours, returning in thirty hours. "This," says an American writer, with pardonable national pride, "was the first voyage of considerable length ever made by a steam-vessel; and Fulton, though not to be classed with James Watt as an inventor, is entitled to the great honor of having been the first to make steam-navigation an every-day commercial success, and of having thus made the first application of the steam-engine to ship-propulsion, which was not followed by the retire-



ment of the experimenter from the field of his labors before success was permanently insured."

Many amusing stories are told of the consternation the *Clermont* excited in those who saw her for the first time. Persons who had seen her passing at night described her as "a monster moving on the waters, defying wind and tide, and breathing flames and smoke." "The first steamboats," writes Colden, Fulton's enthusiastic biographer, "as others yet do, used dry pine-wood for fuel, which sends a column of ignited vapor many feet above the flue, and whenever the flue is stirred a galaxy of sparks fly off, and in the night-time have a very brilliant and beautiful appearance. This uncommon light first attracted the attention of the crews of other vessels. Notwithstanding the wind and tide were adverse to its approach, they saw with astonishment it was rapidly coming toward them; and when it came so near as that the noise of the machinery and paddles was heard, the crews in some instances shrunk beneath their decks from the terrific sight, and left their vessels to go on shore, while others prostrated themselves and besought Providence to protect them from the approaches of the horrible monster which was marching on the tide, and lighting its path with the fires which it vomited."

The trial-trip of the *Clermont* having proved successful, she was used as a regular passenger-boat between New York and Albany. Fulton afterward built other and better vessels, and worked with untiring energy and enterprise in improving and extending steam-navigation. An important rival soon appeared in the field. A few weeks after the triumph of Fulton, Colonel John Stevens, of Hoboken, had a steam-vessel, which he named the *Phoenix*, ready for trial. As the monopoly of steam-navigation in the State of New York had been secured to Livingston and Fulton, the *Phoenix* was shut out from the Hudson, and was therefore taken round by sea to Philadelphia, to ply on the Delaware, thus being, it is believed, the first steam-vessel to make a sea-voyage. After the successful enterprises of Fulton and Stevens steamboats increased in America





ROBERT FULTON.

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very rapidly. R. L. Stevens, the son of John Stevens, suggested many valuable improvements in their construction, some of the early vessels made by him attaining what was then the unprecedented speed of thirteen miles an hour.

Steam-vessels for passenger traffic were not introduced into Britain till five years after the successful voyage of the *Clermont*. Among those who witnessed the trial-trip of the *Charlotte Dundas*, in 1802, was Henry Bell, a young man possessed of some mechanical ability, who had hitherto led rather a shiftless existence. Born in 1767, at Torphichen, in East Lothian, of very poor parents, he became a weaver, and then a carpenter, in which capacity he was employed in making the wood-work of Mr. Miller's trial boat for the canal, when Symington was engaged in constructing the engine. From about this time (1787) Bell was, it is said, an enthusiastic believer in the advantages to be obtained from steam-vessels. In 1800, and in 1803, he endeavored to convince the Admiralty of "the practicability and great utility of applying steam to the propelling of vessels against wind and tide, and every obstruction on rivers and seas where there was depth of water," but without success. In 1811—having, we suppose, by this time become possessed of some capital—he ordered John Wood, a ship-builder of Port Glasgow, to construct for him a small vessel of twenty-five tons burden. This vessel was fitted with an engine of four horse-power; and in January, 1812, the *Comet*, as she was called, began to ply for passengers and goods between Glasgow and Helensburgh, where Bell carried on business as the proprietor of a sort of hotel. As the passage of the *Clermont* along the Hudson had excited the amazement of the spectators, so did the *Comet* terrify the Highlanders of Loch Fyne, when it ascended that sea-lake to Inverary. On its arrival at the quay not a man or boy could be seen to lend a hand to secure the rope-line. They had all hid themselves.

Bell, like Fulton, had before long many rivals. In 1814 there were five steamers, all Scotch, regularly working in British waters. In 1813 a person of the name of Dawson estab-

lished a steam-packet on the Thames, to ply between Gravesend and London, "which was the first that did so for public accommodation, although Mr. Laurence, of Bristol, who introduced a steamboat on the Severn soon after the successful operations on the Clyde, had her carried to London (through the canals) to ply on the Thames; but, from the opposition of the watermen to the innovation, he was in the end obliged to take her to her first station." In 1815 a steamboat made a passage from Glasgow to London; in 1818 one went from New York to New Orleans; and in 1820 a service of steam-packets was established between Holyhead and Dublin. In 1838 steam communication between Great Britain and America was established. On April 4 of that year the *Sirius*, a ship of 700 tons burden and of 250 horse-power, sailed from Cork; and on April 8 the *Great Western*, a ship of 1340 tons and 450 horse-power, sailed from Bristol. Both arrived at New York on the same day—April 23—the *Sirius* in the morning, and the *Great Western* in the afternoon. Henceforth steam-vessels became very largely employed for long voyages, and the old idea that they were suitable only for short passages was quite abandoned. In concluding this brief sketch of the introduction of steam-navigation we may mention that the screw-propeller, which has almost driven paddle-wheels out of the field, first began to be generally used about 1840. As early as 1804, however, Stevens tried at New York a vessel fitted with a screw-propeller, driven by one of Boulton & Watt's engines.

Steam-communication had, as we have seen, its opponents in early days; it has its opponents still. Mr. John Ruskin—a name never to be pronounced without reverence by all who admire great genius, unflinching courage, and lofty morality—has frequently lifted up his voice against our railway system and the havoc it plays in marring the loveliness of the finest natural scenery. "You think," he writes in one of the early numbers of *Fors Clavigera*, "it a great triumph to make the sun draw brown landscapes for you. That was also a dis-

covery, and some day may be useful. But the sun had drawn landscapes before for you, not in brown, but in green, and blue, and all imaginable colors, here in England. Not one of you ever looked at them then; not one of you cares for the loss of them now, when you have shut the sun out with smoke, so that he can draw nothing more except brown blots through a hole in a box. There was a rocky valley between Buxton and Bakewell once upon a time, divine as the Vale of Tempe; you might have seen the gods there morning and evening—Apollo and all the sweet Muses of the Light—walking in fair procession on the lawns of it, and to and fro among the pinnacles of its crags. You cared neither for gods nor grass, but for cash (which you did not know the way to get); you thought you would get it by what the *Times* calls ‘railroad enterprise.’ You enterprised a railroad through the valley; you blasted its rocks away, heaped thousands of tons of shale into its lovely stream. The valley is gone, and the gods with it; and now every fool in Buxton can be at Bakewell in half an hour, and every fool in Bakewell at Buxton; which you think a lucrative process of exchange—you fools everywhere.” So far, no doubt, Mr. Ruskin’s denunciations of railways are well enough founded. The steam-engine unquestionably detracts from the beauties of scenery; but when we consider the many advantages which railways bring in their train we cannot but wonder that Mr. Ruskin should be so blind to them. To the tired artisan and the overworked clerk they afford the means of breathing for a few hours the fresh country air, which otherwise they might never have the opportunity of enjoying. Before the railway, a “day in the country” was the privilege of but few towns-people; now it is the privilege of many. If a few bits of choice scenery have been destroyed by the inroads of the “iron horse,” it must be remembered that to thousands railways have brought the boon of enabling them to revel in country delights which had formerly been reserved for a few wealthy tourists.

The beneficial effects of steam-communication on society and on commerce have been so often recapitulated that it would be



idle to dwell on them. It has welded into closer intercourse the different sections of society; it has united the towns and villages of the kingdom by one continuous net-work; it has done much to place the inhabitant of the metropolis and the inhabitant of the remote country village on a footing of equality as regards intelligence and as regards commercial advantages. By the increased facilities it affords for travelling it has opened men's minds and done away with multitudes of absurd prejudices. To the business man it has proved an unmixed benefit. It has extended the market for his goods; it has saved his time, and consequently his money; and it has added greatly to the wealth of the country. Charles Mackay sings no less wisely than beautifully when he exclaims:

“No poetry in railways! Foolish thought  
Of a dull brain, to no fine music wrought,  
By Mammon dazzled! Though the people prize  
The gold untold, yet shall not we despise  
The triumphs of our time, or fail to see  
Of pregnant mind the fruitful progeny,  
Ushering the daylight of the world's new morn.  
Look up, ye doubters! be no more forlorn!  
Smooth your rough brows, ye little wise! rejoice,  
Ye who despond! and with exulting voice  
Salute, ye earnest spirits of our time,  
The Young Improvement ripening to her prime,  
Who, in the fulness of her genial youth,  
Prepares the way for Freedom and for Truth;  
And break the barriers that, since earth began,  
Have made mankind a foreigner to man.  
Lay down your rails, ye nations, near and far;  
Yoke your full trains to Steam's triumphal car;  
Link town to town; and in these iron bands  
Unite the strange and oft-embattled lands.  
Peace and Improvement round each train shall soar,  
And Knowledge light the Ignorance of yore;  
Men joined in amity shall wonder long  
That Hate had power to lead their fathers wrong;  
Or that false glory lured their hearts astray,  
And made it virtuous and sublime to slay.”



## THE ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH.

*COOKE, WHEATSTONE, AND OTHERS.*

It has often been observed, that of all the many wonderful inventions which in recent ages have altered and improved the face of the world, none is more striking and extraordinary than the electric telegraph. The simple rustic, as he wanders along the dusty highway, sees the long, bare poles with the iron wires stretched along them, motionless save when the passing breeze causes them to vibrate; and, however ignorant he may be, he knows that along these wires messages of life and death from perhaps the farthest corner of the land are passing and repassing, and that should any mischance, such as a tempest of wind, occur to break them, the interruption of public business caused by the accident would be greater than if, a century ago, a snow-storm or other casualty had prevented the transmission of her Majesty's mails. How he accounts for this wonderful phenomenon will depend upon the degree of culture to which he has attained. If in a very primitive condition, it is not impossible that he will (as the present writer, at an early period of his existence, remembers to have done) anxiously scan the wires for the piece of paper containing the message that is floated along them, and, as he scans them in vain, will sagaciously conclude that the piece of paper is invisible owing to the incredible speed with which it is wafted along. If, however, his education has been superior to allowing him to fall into such a childish piece of ignorance as this, he will veil his want of knowledge under a cloud of words, and, like many of his betters—shall we say the majority of people?—sum up his

comments on the subject in the remark, "Wonderful thing, electricity!" Most persons, except those practically connected with the matter, are content to reap the fruits of that wonder-working power, without bothering themselves about what it is, or by what means it has been pressed into the service of mankind. Into the details of telegraphic manipulation and apparatus we do not propose to enter. To give some account of the successive steps by which the electric telegraph has been elevated from something little better than the position of a scientific toy to a work of the greatest practical importance and value, is the object of the present chapter.

From the earliest times the want was felt of some instrument which would enable signals to be communicated to those at a distance. Especially in the time of war was this want experienced. It was a matter of the greatest consequence to be able to communicate with allies, so that the various divisions of an army should be acquainted with each other's movements or warned of the approach of a common foe. Beacon-fires were, of course, the earliest and most convenient mode of doing this, and these were employed for many ages, from Scriptural times down to days comparatively modern. Various more or less ingenious devices, mostly worked by the aid of the telescope, were by-and-by introduced, none of them, however, of very much practical importance. These, therefore, we need not take up space by enumerating, though the latest of them merits a passing notice. It originated thus: A Frenchman, Claude Chappé, when at school in a religious establishment at Angers, contrived an apparatus consisting of a post bearing a revolving beam and circulatory arms, with which he conveyed signals to three of his brothers who were at a school about half a league distant, and read them off with a telescope. The experiences of his youth were not lost upon him, and in 1792 he laid his plans before the French Legislature, stating that "the speed of the correspondence would be such that the legislative body would be able to send their orders to the frontier, and receive an answer back, during the continuance of a single sitting."

After many disappointments he obtained 6000 francs to enable him to make experiments in Paris; but twice in succession was his apparatus burnt to the ground by the ignorant populace, who imagined that his designs boded them no good. Eventually, however, he was more successful, and a telegraph on his plan was constructed between Paris and Lille. Though very simple in construction, his machine was capable of producing one hundred and ninety-two separate signals, and, after its success in France, was introduced into England, when, by its means, the Board of Admiralty was placed within a few minutes of Deal, Portsmouth, or Plymouth. These "Semaphore" telegraphs, as they were called, continued, under various modifications, to exist till the end of 1847, when the incontestable advantages of the electric telegraph drove the last of them from the field. One of their greatest disadvantages was their frequent liability to interruption from misty weather. An amusing instance of this is told in Lardner's book on the electric telegraph. On an occasion when, during the Peninsular war, the admiral at Plymouth had an important message to transmit to Whitehall, he was only able to forward part of it at first, a thick fog gathering over a portion of the line of stations, and interrupting the communication. Great distress and anxiety resulted in London, for the first part of the message transmitted was, "Wellington defeated." The remainder of the message, which came next day, "the French at Salamanca," changed the metropolitan sorrow into gladness.

The electric telegraph, like most great inventions, was of slow and gradual origin. Many hands and many minds had busied themselves with the subject ere telegraphy by electricity became a practical reality. Some of the phenomena of the great power itself were known to the ancients. Thales of Miletus, who lived about six hundred years before the Christian era, observed that when amber was subjected to friction it acquired the power of attracting light substances, such as bits of feather and pieces of straw. Theophrastus also and Pliny toyed a little with the subject, but left it surrounded with the

same mysterious haze as that with which they had found it enveloped. From classical times to the end of the sixteenth century, when Dr. Gilbert published a treatise in which he classified all the then known electric substances, and discussed the electricity of the air and the earth, is almost a blank in the history of electrical progress. After this progress followed somewhat more rapidly. Dr. Wall, Otto Guericke (the discoverer of the electrical machine), Grey and Wheeler (to whom is due the discovery that different materials possess different conducting powers), Dufay, and Ludolf of Berlin, may all be mentioned as having contributed to the stock of electrical knowledge. More important in its results than any of their discoveries was the simultaneous invention of the Leyden jar by Kleist and Muschenbroeck in 1746, at the town whose name it bears.\* It was considerably improved by Sir William Watson, who gave it the form it now has, and who made with it several important experiments. In 1747 he stretched a wire across the Thames over old Westminster Bridge. One end was fixed to the exterior coating of a Leyden jar, and the other was held by a person in one of his hands, while the other hand grasped an iron rod. The moment the latter dipped the rod into the river both parties felt a shock. Following up this experiment, Watson, in the same year, transmitted an electric discharge through 2800 feet of wire at Stoke Newington. Soon after he repeated his experiments on a large scale near Shooter's Hill, where he transmitted the electric impulse over two miles of wire, which was supported on wooden posts. Great public interest and curiosity were aroused by these experiments, which were repeated by Franklin in 1748, across the Schuylkill, at Philadelphia, and by Du Luc, about the same time, across the Lake of Geneva. None of these experimenters, however, seems to have thought about applying the newly-discovered power to the communication of intelligence.

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\* The invention of the Leyden jar is also attributed to a person of the name of Cuneus.



In the *Scots Magazine* for 1753 appears a letter dated "Renfrew, February 18, 1753," signed "C. M.," to whom belongs the great honor of having been the first to publish the idea of applying electricity to the telegraph. It is, indeed, as Mr. Sabine justly remarks, one of the most interesting documents in the whole history of telegraphy, and, as such, may be quoted entire :

"SIR,—It is well known to all who are conversant in electrical experiments that the electric power may be propagated along a small wire, from one place to another, without being sensibly abated by the length of its progress. Let, then, a set of wires, equal in number to the letters of the alphabet, be extended horizontally between two given places, parallel to one another, and each of them about an inch distant from that next to it. At every twenty yards' end let them be fixed in glass, or jeweller's cement, to some firm body, both to prevent them from touching the earth or any other non-electric, and from breaking by their own gravity. Let the electric gun-barrel be placed at right angles with the extremities of the wires, and about one inch below them. Also, let the wires be fixed in a solid piece of glass, at six inches from the end; and let that part of them which reaches from the glass to the machine have sufficient spring and stiffness to recover its situation after having been brought in contact with the barrel. Close by the supporting glass let a ball be suspended from every wire; and about a sixth or eighth of an inch below the balls place the letters of the alphabet, marked on bits of paper, or any other substance that may be light enough to rise to the electrified ball; and at the same time let it be so continued that each of them may re-assume its proper place when dropped. All things constructed as above, and the minute previously fixed, I begin the conversation with my distant friend in this manner: having set the electrical machine agoing as in ordinary experiments, suppose I am to pronounce the word *Sir*: with a piece of glass or any other *electric per se*, I strike the wire *S*, so as to bring it in contact with the barrel; then *i*, then *r*, all

in the same way; and my correspondent, almost in the same instant, observes the several characters rise in order to the electrified balls at the end of his wires. Thus I spell away as long as I think fit; and my correspondent, for the sake of memory, writes the characters as they rise, and may join and read them afterward as often as he inclines. Upon a signal given, or from choice, I stop the machine; and, taking up the pen in my turn, I write down whatever my friend at the other end strikes out.

“If anybody should think this way tires one, let him, instead of the balls, suspend a range of bells from the roof, equal in number to the letters of the alphabet, gradually decreasing in size from the bell *A* to *Z*; and from the horizontal wires let there be another set reaching to the several bells; one, viz., from the horizontal wire *A* to the bell *A*, another from the horizontal wire *B* to the bell *B*, etc. Then let him who begins the discourse bring the wires into contact with the barrel, as before; and the electric spark, breaking on bells of different size, will inform his correspondent by the sound what wires have been touched; and thus, by some practice, they may come to understand the language of the chimes in whole words, without being put to the trouble of writing down every letter.

“The same thing may be otherwise effected. Let the balls be suspended over the characters as before, but instead of bringing the ends of the horizontal wires in contact with the barrel, let a second set reach from the electrified cable, so as to be in contact with the horizontal ones; and let it be so contrived at the same time that any of them may be removed from the corresponding horizontal by the slightest touch, and may bring itself into contact when set at liberty. This may be done by the help of a small spring and slider, or twenty other methods which the least ingenuity will discover. In this way the characters will always adhere to the balls, excepting when any one of the secondaries is removed from contact with its horizontal; and then the letter at the other end of the hori-

zontal will immediately drop from its ball. But I mention this only by way of variety.

"Some may perhaps think that, although the electric fire has not been observed to diminish sensibly in its progress through any length of wire that has been tried hitherto, yet, as that has never exceeded some thirty or forty yards, it may reasonably be supposed that in a far greater length it would be remarkably diminished, and probably would be entirely drained off in a few miles by the surrounding air. To prevent the objection, and save longer argument, lay over the wires from one end to the other with a thin coat of jeweller's cement. This may be done for a trifle of additional expense; and, as it is an *electric per se*, will effectually secure any part of the fire from mixing with the atmosphere.

"I am, etc.,

C. M."\*

Whoever "C. M." may have been, he had evidently bestowed much care and thought upon his subject; but his letter appears to have been almost quite unnoticed by electricians. In 1774 Lesage, a Frenchman, at Geneva, submitted to Frederick the Great of Prussia a plan for an electric telegraph, which was an almost exact realization of "C. M.'s" notions; but his project was never carried into execution.

In 1787 Lomond, a Frenchman, succeeded in transmitting intelligence along a single-line wire. His invention is thus described by Arthur Young, in his travels in France, under date September 16, 1787: "In the evening to Monsieur Lomond, a very ingenious and inventive mechanic. In electricity he has made a remarkable discovery: you write two or three words on a paper; he takes it with him into a room, and turns a machine enclosed in a cylindrical case, at the top of which is an electrometer, a small, fine pith ball; a wire con-

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\* In recent times attention to this letter was, we believe, first called by Sir David Brewster, who reprinted it in a Glasgow newspaper, the *Commonwealth*.

nects with a similar cylinder and electrometer in a distant department; and his wife, by remarking the corresponding motions of the ball, writes down the words they indicate, from which it appears that he has formed an alphabet of motions. As the length of the wire makes no difference in the effect, a correspondence might be carried on at any distance—within and without a besieged town, for instance; or for a purpose much more worthy, and a thousand times more harmless—between two lovers, prohibited or prevented from any better connection. Whatever the use may be, the invention is beautiful.”

Other telegraphic expedients were suggested by Reusser (1794), by Don Silva, in Spain, about the same time, and by Cavallo in 1795. But they all proved more or less failures, as was inevitable, seeing that they were all worked by what is called “frictional” electricity—that is, by electricity obtained from Leyden jars. By it there was no means of obtaining a continuous current, so that the instrument might be worked uninterruptedly. The discovery of another form of electricity—to which we owe our present telegraphic system—was, like many other discoveries, the result of the merest accident. “It may be proved,” says M. Arago, “that this immortal discovery arose in the most immediate and direct manner from a slight cold with which a Bolognese lady was attacked in 1790, for which her physicians prescribed the use of frog-broth.”

The story runs as follows: The wife of Signor Galvani, the Professor of Anatomy at Bologna, being indisposed, her physician prescribed her a dish of frog-broth. Frogs were accordingly procured, skinned, washed, and laid upon a table in the professor’s laboratory, which appears to have served the double purpose of a room for scientific and culinary operations. One of the professor’s assistants, who was engaged in conducting some experiments with a large electrical machine, which stood upon the same table, had occasion to draw sparks from the machine, and the wife of Galvani, who was present, was surprised to observe that every time he did so the limbs of the dead frogs moved as if alive. She immediately commu-



nicated this strange incident to her husband, who repeated the experiment, with, of course, the same result. Greatly struck by the phenomenon, he determined to follow it up, and henceforth devoted himself to experiments on the electricity of animals with such zeal, that, it is said, he became the terror of every frog-pond near Bologna. Another fortunate chance discovery rewarded his perseverance. Having prepared the hinder parts of several frogs for anatomical investigation, he "passed copper hooks through part of the dorsal column, which remained above the junction of the thighs, for the convenience of hanging them up till they might be required for the purpose of experiment. In this manner he happened to suspend several upon the iron balcony in front of his laboratory, when, to his inexpressible astonishment, the limbs were thrown into strong convulsions." Mistaking the part played in the experiment by the iron and copper, he took refuge in the hypothesis of "animal electricity," which he maintained to his death with great ingenuity and perseverance.

His theory was overthrown by a learned rival, Volta, Professor of Physics at Pavia. Volta contended that the two metals, copper and iron, in the experiment of Galvani, were the real electrometers, and that the muscles of the dead frog only played the part of moist conductors in completing the circuit. In the course of a series of experiments, in which he tried to produce effects similar to those witnessed by Galvani, he substituted other materials for the animal tissues which Galvani regarded as essential. He was of opinion—erroneously, it would appear—that the simple contact of two dissimilar metals was sufficient to develop electricity, and that the strength of the electricity excited depended upon the nature of the metals. The theory now generally adopted is that first suggested by Fabroni, which regards chemical decomposition as necessary to the development of the voltaic current.

After continued application, Volta, in March, 1800, was able to announce to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society of England, that he had found a means of augmenting,



at pleasure, the development of galvanic electricity. His apparatus for doing so was that known as the "voltaic pile," which has since passed through several more or less ingenious modifications. Public attention was at once excited by the discovery; and, at Napoleon's invitation, Volta visited Paris in 1801, and explained and illustrated his electrical theories to the members of the Academy of Sciences. Napoleon was one of the audience, and, we are told, "when the report of the committee on the subject was read he proposed that the rules of the Academy, which produced some delay in conferring its honors, should be suspended, and the gold medal immediately awarded to Volta, as a testimony of the gratitude of the philosophers of France for his discovery. This proposition being carried by acclamation, the hero of a hundred fields, who never did things by halves, and who was filled with a prophetic enthusiasm as to the powers of the pile, ordered two thousand crowns to be sent to Volta the same day from the public treasury, to defray the expenses of his journey."

Napoleon was right in his "prophetic enthusiasm," but it was a considerable time before the high expectations formed of the results of the voltaic pile were realized. Soon after the receipt of Volta's letter to Sir Joseph Banks, two British chemists, Nicholson and Carlisle, discovered that water is decomposed into its constituents of oxygen and hydrogen by the voltaic current. In 1808 S. T. Sömmering, a surgeon of Munich, announced his invention of an ingenious system of telegraphing based upon this discovery. Upon the bottom of a glass vessel he fixed thirty-five glass tubes, each containing a gold point, twenty-five marked with letters of the alphabet, nine with numerals, and one with zero. From each of these thirty-five points there passed a copper conductor terminating in a small brass cylinder, in the middle of which was a groove for receiving a small screw-nut for fixing the wires which united the corresponding point with the positive or negative pole of the battery or pile which he used. When the glass vessel was filled with water, and the electricity communicated to the let-

ter at one end of a wire, the gold point corresponding to this letter gave out a bubble of gas, which was largest when it was oxygen and smallest when it was hydrogen, so that he could transmit two letters at once. Sömmering covered each of his thirty-five wires with silk, and surrounded the whole with varnish.\* This telegraph was too slow, and involved too great an outlay, to be of any commercial utility; but it paved the way for better things. Various improvements on Sömmering's system, some of them of considerable importance, were suggested by his biographer, Professor Schweigger, of Erlangen.

The next great epoch in the history of the electric telegraph is the discovery of electro-magnetism by Oersted. "About the year 1820," says a competent writer, "there occurred to him one of those brilliant accidents which, happening to a mind prepared to seize their significance, ripen into great discoveries. He was engaged in some electrical experiments with a voltaic battery, and held a small mariner's compass in his hand. He observed that the compass was deflected as the current passed. He repeated the experiment, and found that the effect of the current varied according as the current passed above, below, or around the magnetic needle. It was soon ascertained that the magnetic needle had a tendency to place itself at right angles in the direction of the current. By a brilliant effort of inductive reasoning Oersted sprung to the conclusion that the magnet obeys a constant directive action of the earth, caused by electric currents constantly passing from the magnetic equator from east to west, and that the magnetic needle, subjected to the action of a current, could (as his experiment showed to be the case) be moved at will; because the motive force, being nearer, and consequently more powerful than the ordinary terrestrial magnetism, overpowered the directive action of the

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\* This description of Sömmering's telegraph is mainly derived from an article on the electric telegraph, by Sir David Brewster, in the *North British Review* for 1855.

earth. The identity of electricity with magnetism was thenceforth established.”\*

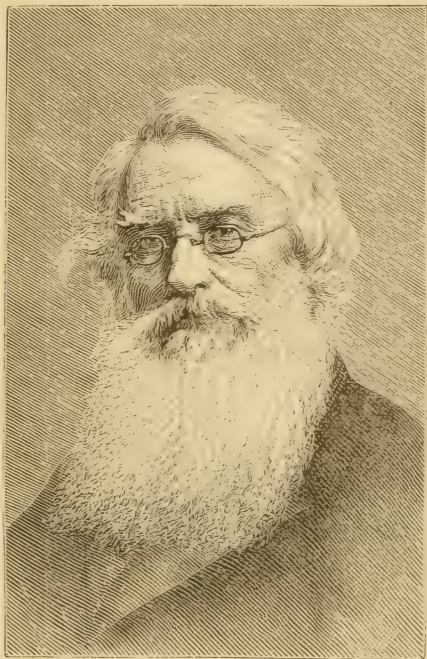
We cannot here give an account of all the great electrical discoveries made by Faraday and others, nor can we describe the various most ingenious pieces of telegraphic mechanism which have been invented by so many gifted men. Most people, we imagine, are of the opinion of Faraday, who said that he never could understand any apparatus unless he actually saw it; and we believe we are correct in saying that many go even farther than he did, and find considerable difficulty in understanding machinery even when they actually do see it. Our object is to narrate the history of the practical realization of the electric telegraph, not to describe the various apparatus used in working it.

Oersted's great discovery was first applied to the electric telegraph by Ampère, who substituted a compass-needle in place of the gold points and gas-bubbles of Sömmering, so that by touching a number of keys corresponding to each letter of the alphabet, the needles at the other end of the twenty-five wires were put in motion. This telegraph, like that of Sömmering, never came into practical use, on account of the number of line wires. Excellent modifications of it were proposed by Fechner, Ritchie, and Alexander of Edinburgh, who, in 1837, publicly exhibited a telegraph worked upon this system.

At last we leave the territory of theory and experiment, and come to that of practice. “The merit of inventing the modern telegraph, and applying it on a large scale for public use, is, beyond all question, due to Professor Morse, of the United States.” So writes Sir David Brewster, and the best authorities on the question substantially agree with him. In the month of October, 1832, while on his homeward voyage on board the steamship *Sully* from France to the United States, Morse described his ideas of constructing an electric telegraph to W. Pell, the captain of the boat, and to Mr. Rives, the Min-

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\* *Quarterly Review*, No. 287, p. 164.



SAMUEL F. B. MORSE.

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ister of the United States to the French Government. A fellow-passenger of Morse, a Dr. Jackson, afterward claimed that *he* was the real originator of the idea; that he had communicated it to Morse, and that Morse had feloniously made use of it as his own. According to Jackson, he had with him on board an electro-magnet and two galvanic "elements;" but, as they were stowed away among his luggage, he could not get at them. However, he described them to Morse, and gave him rough sketches of them. "There is," says Mr. Sabine, who has some very sensible remarks on the case "*Jackson v. Morse*," "nothing improbable in this, and, indeed, it is just that which would most naturally occur—the allusion to the absolute possession of instruments so intimately connected with the subject of general consideration on the one side, and the desire to have sketches which aided the comprehension on the other. The description of this electro-magnet and of its properties undoubtedly suggested to Morse, either then or afterward, the idea of employing it for a telegraph; but we can find no shadow of evidence, beyond the mere assertion of Jackson, that he it was who proposed it to Morse. Dr. Jackson, who possesses an uneviable reputation in America for setting up claims to other people's inventions, in his statements made in 1837 and in 1850, is guilty of considerable self-contradiction; and only in the latter does he even allude to the employment of an electro-magnet. Apart from this gentleman's equivocal character and conduct, we do not see anything remarkable in the fact that he should have considered himself entitled to some participation in the credit arising from the invention of a telegraph in America. Two men came together. A seed sown, perhaps by some purposeless remark, took root in a fertile soil. The one, profiting by that which he had seen and read of, made suggestions, and gave explanations of phenomena and construction only imperfectly understood by himself, and entirely new to the other. The theme interested both, and became a subject of daily conversation. When they parted, the one forgot or was indifferent to the matter, while the

other, more in earnest, followed it up with diligence, toiling and scheming ways and means to realize what had only been a dream common to both. His labors brought him to the adoption of a method not discussed between them, and Morse became the acknowledged inventor of a great system. Fame and fortune smiling upon the inventor, it was natural enough that Jackson, awakening from his unfortunate indolence, should remember his share in the earlier interchange of ideas that had, perhaps, first directed Morse's attention to the subject of telegraphy. And, although we are compelled to pronounce dishonest those attempts which Jackson made to claim the late and proper invention of Morse—that of the *electro-magnetic recorder*—and strong as is our confidence in the unspotted integrity of our friend, we cannot entirely ignore Jackson—little as he has done—nor deny him an inferior place among those men whose names are associated with the history and progress of the electric telegraph in America.”

Leaving for future consideration Morse's telegraph, which was not introduced until five years after the time when he was impressed with the notion of its feasibility, we may mention the telegraph of Gauss and Weber, of Göttingen. In 1833 they erected a telegraphic wire between the Astronomical and Magnetical Observatory of Göttingen and the Physical Cabinet of the University, for the purpose of carrying intelligence from the one locality to the other. To these great philosophers, however, rather the theory than the practice of electric telegraphy was indebted. Their apparatus was so improved as to be almost a new invention by Steinhilber, of Munich, who, in 1837—a year forever memorable in the history of electrical science—succeeded in sending a current from one end to the other of a wire 36,000 feet in length, the action of which caused two needles to vibrate from side to side, and strike a bell at each movement. To Steinhilber the honor is due of having discovered the important and extraordinary fact that the earth might be used as part of the circuit of an electric current.

The introduction of the electric telegraph into England dates

from the same year as that in which Steinhill's experiments took place. William Fothergill Cooke, a gentleman who held a commission in the Indian Army, returned from India on leave of absence, and afterward, because of his bad health, resigned his commission, and went to Heidelberg to study anatomy. In 1836 Professor Mönke, of Heidelberg, exhibited an electro-telegraphic experiment, "in which electric currents, passing along a conducting wire, conveyed signals to a distant station by the deflection of a magnetic needle enclosed in Schweigger's galvanometer or multiplier. The currents were produced by a voltaic battery placed at each end of the wire, and the apparatus was worked by moving the ends of the wires backward and forward between the battery and the galvanometer." According to Sir David Brewster, in the article formerly referred to, Cooke was so struck with this experiment, that he immediately resolved to apply it to purposes of higher utility than the illustration of a lecture, and he abandoned his anatomical pursuits, and applied his whole energies to the invention of a practical electric telegraph. In a short time he produced two telegraphs of different construction. When his plans were completed he came to England; and in February, 1837, having consulted Faraday and Dr. Roget on the construction of the electric-magnet employed in a part of his apparatus, the latter gentleman advised him to apply to Professor Wheatstone. We must now retrace our steps a little.

Charles Wheatstone, who shares with Cooke the honor of having introduced the electric telegraph into England, was a man to whom scientific detail and manipulation had been familiar from his youth upward. Born in 1802, the son of Mr. W. Wheatstone, a citizen of Gloucester, he very early attracted considerable attention by a work entitled "Experiments in Sound," published in 1823. In 1834 he was appointed Professor of Experimental Philosophy in King's College, London, and two years later was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, before which body he read a paper entitled "Contributions to the Physiology of Vision," remarkable as containing the first

mention *totidem verbis* of the stereoscope. As early as 1835 his attention was directed to electric telegraphy, in connection with which he soon made many successful experiments.

The result of the meeting of Cooke and Wheatstone was, that they resolved to unite their several discoveries; and in the month of May, 1837, they took out their first patent "for improvements in giving signals and sounding alarms in distant places by means of electric currents transmitted through metallic circuits." The apparatus devised by Messrs. Cooke and Wheatstone was a very primitive one, and possesses only an historical interest—a remark which also applies in great measure to their subsequent improvements on their first instrument, ingenious though they were for the time.

By-and-by, as might probably have been anticipated, difficulties arose between Cooke and Wheatstone, as to whom the main credit of introducing the electric telegraph into England was due. Each had their eager partisans, and each, probably, was too indignant at the apparent neglect of his own claims to render strict justice to those of his partner. In 1840 the dispute came to such a height that Mr. Cooke insisted upon having it ascertained by arbitration, "in what shares, and with what priorities and relative degrees of merit, the said parties hereto are the inventors of the electric telegraph, due regard being paid to the original projection thereof, to the development of its laws and properties, to the practical introduction of it into the United Kingdom, to the improvements made upon it since its introduction there, and to all other matters which the arbitrators, or any two of them, shall in their discretion think deserving of their consideration." The arbiters chosen were Sir Isambard Brunel, named by Mr. Cooke; and Mr. Daniell, a brother professor of Mr. Wheatstone in King's College. After having taken five months to consider the documents submitted to them, on April 27, 1841, the arbiters made their award, of which the sum and substance is contained in the concluding paragraph: "While Mr. Cooke is entitled to stand alone as the gentleman to whom this coun-



try is indebted for having practically introduced and carried out the electric telegraph as a useful undertaking, promising to be a work of national importance; and Professor Wheatstone is acknowledged as the scientific man whose profound and successful researches had already prepared the public to receive it as a project capable of practical application, it is to the united labors of the two gentlemen, so well qualified for mutual assistance, that we must attribute the rapid progress which this important invention has made during the five years since they have been associated." With this award both parties professed themselves well satisfied, and the controversy was silenced for a while, only, however, to break forth soon with greater violence than ever. We need not enter into the details of a most unfortunate occurrence. Mr. Cooke accused Wheatstone (with a certain amount of justice, it should seem) of entirely ignoring his claims; and in doing so Mr. Cooke appears to have rather exaggerated his own services. Most will readily agree to the wise words of Mr. Sabine: "It was once a popular fallacy in England that Messrs. Cooke and Wheatstone were the original inventors of the electric telegraph. The electric telegraph had, properly speaking, no inventor; it grew up, as we have seen, little by little, each inventor adding his little to advance it toward perfection. Messrs. Cooke and Wheatstone were, however, the first who established a telegraph for practical purposes, comparatively on a large scale, and in which the public were more nearly concerned than in those experiments in which the ends of the wires were brought into laboratories and observatories. Therefore it was that the names of these enterprising and talented men came to the public ear, while those of Ampère, of Schilling, the inventor of the system adopted by them, and of Steinhill, remained comparatively unknown."

In October, 1837, Professor Morse, after several years of study and experiment, exhibited his mode of telegraphy on a line of half a mile in extent. His system, which was not practically introduced into America till 1844, when it was



used on the first American line between Washington and Baltimore, is now — with, of course, many improvements — the most extensively employed system of telegraphy. Indeed, it may be questioned if any one has done more for the improvement of practical telegraphy than Morse.

Space would fail us to describe the countless ingenious contrivances which have brought the electric telegraph to its present high state of perfection. In no department of human skill has more deft manipulation and acuteness of intellect been shown than in the perfecting of telegraphic apparatus. The names of Hughes, the inventor of one of the best of several excellent type-printing telegraphs; of Mr. Alexander Bain, who originated the chemical telegraph; and of Bakewell, who perfected the copying telegraph, may stand as synonymes for acuteness of invention and patience in working out complicated details. At the present time we have no lack of electricians of the first order of eminence, who follow worthily in the footsteps of their predecessors. Sir William Thomson, who rendered such distinguished service in laying the Atlantic cable, in his own special departments of the science has no living equal; while Mr. W. H. Preece and Mr. R. S. Culley (not to relate a long list of names in which many who ought to be mentioned would necessarily be omitted) have attained great and well-deserved eminence as practical telegraphists. In fact, with so rapid strides is electric telegraphy advancing, that even the best text-books on the subject become in great measure obsolete in the course of a few years.

Previous to his acquaintance with Professor Wheatstone, Mr. Cooke, in January, 1837, brought various instruments before the Manchester and Liverpool Railway, with the view of applying them to signalling through Edge Hill Tunnel. These plans, however, came to nothing. The first line of electric telegraph actually laid down for public purposes was constructed on the Blackwall Railway in 1838. It was successful, and soon after other railway companies began to avail themselves of the same potent auxiliary. Instead of being

stretched along, the wires were, on the Great Western Railway, at first placed inside a continuous tube, fixed a few inches above the ground, at one side of the way. This arrangement, however, was soon abandoned. Several important public services rendered by the telegraph soon established its popularity. "The Great Western line," we read in an interesting tract on "Electric Communication," in Chambers's *Papers for the People*, "had not long been complete when a striking instance occurred of the service which the telegraph might render to society. A man of respectable exterior took his seat in a first-class carriage at the Slough station, eighteen miles from London; he was a murderer hurrying away from the yet warm body of his victim. The panting engine nears its destination; the eager criminal believes his escape certain; but the alarm has been given at the fatal spot, and quick as lightning the telegraph transmits it to Paddington, with a description of the suspected individual. In three minutes an answer announces the arrival of the train, the identification of the fugitive, and the certainty of his capture. There are few persons who will not remember the impression made on the public mind by this victory of science and justice over crime. [This was written in 1851.] Again, a communication transmitted from Paddington immediately that the year 1845 commenced was received at Slough in 1844, the clock at that place not having struck midnight. Though so short a distance, the difference of longitude was sufficient to mark the inconceivable velocity of the electro-magnetic current. Swift-footed Time was henceforth to be beaten in the race."

The laying down of an overhead telegraph wire is not a very difficult or complicated business. The posts—in the English lines frequently made of larch-wood thirty to forty years old—are planted a few feet in the earth, to keep them firm, and stand about twenty feet out of the ground. Wooden posts are not the most durable ones; iron posts, which are a good deal employed abroad, have the advantage in this respect, but, on the other hand, they have the disadvantage of

being considerably more expensive. According to Mr. Sabine there can be little doubt that, in the course of time, only metal posts will be employed, on account of their superior durability, solidity, and freedom from damage by accidents. In some climates, he goes on to say, wooden posts require to be renewed every two or three years, and, in the most favorable, rarely last longer than six years; while an iron telegraph-post is as durable as a lamp-post, and would certainly last ten times as long, and not cost five times as much, as a wooden one; so that in the end an immense saving would be effected by their employment, though the first cost is so much greater. Pillars of stone have once or twice been used in place of iron or metal posts. The posts having been erected in the proportion of about twenty to a mile, the next thing is to stretch the wires across them. These wires are commonly made of iron, covered with a coat of some metal which oxidizes slowly—zinc is the one generally employed—and are then said to be galvanized. Copper wires are said to be better than iron ones, since they possess superior conducting-power and greater durability, but, of course, they are more expensive. The wires are hung upon or pass through what are called *insulators*—that is, small cups of porcelain or stone-ware, which are screwed to the supporters or held by brackets. The purpose of these insulators—or, as they might be called, non-conductors—is to prevent the electrical fluid from making its escape from the wire, and hence they must be made of some material which is *insulated*—that is, which does not conduct electricity. In this country they are generally made of earthen-ware; in the United States glass is generally employed.

Besides the overhead telegraphs, underground telegraphs are much in favor and possess many advantages. They are not liable, like the overhead telegraphs, to be damaged by storms, like those which in the early part of the present year played so much havoc with the overhead wires in many parts of the country, and caused so much public inconvenience. The great

objection to them is their cost, and that will generally prove a powerful obstacle to their extensive adoption.

The mention of underground telegraphy leads us naturally to the second part of our subject—the laying of submarine cables. It is a story full of romance and checkered incident, full of records of difficulties bravely encountered, and of earnest perseverance at length rewarded by success. To whom is due the merit of having first suggested the idea of a submarine cable is not known for certain. The frequent use of underground telegraphs which often passed over rivers and docks no doubt suggested the idea to several. Whoever first originated the *idea*, it was Messrs. Brett who first carried it into practical execution. On June 16, 1845, they registered a “General Oceanic Telegraph Company,” the object of which was “to form a connecting mode of communication, by telegraphic means, from the British Islands, and across the Atlantic Ocean, to Nova Scotia, and the Canadas, the Colonies, and Continental kingdoms.” The advantages of the scheme were explained to Sir Robert Peel, then Prime-minister; and, as a test of the practicability of his plans, Mr. Brett offered, by means of a submarine and subterranean telegraph, “to place Dublin Castle in instantaneous communication with Downing Street, provided £20,000 was advanced by the state toward the expense.” His offer was declined. British statesmen have never been too ready to encourage inventors till their inventions have been thoroughly tried and proved.

After many disappointments, and having for some time in vain solicited the patronage of the government and the public, Messrs. Brett determined to lay down a cable between France and England at their own expense. In 1849 they obtained from Napoleon III. permission to do so; and the exclusive benefit of their enterprise for ten years was granted to them. By the British government they were not so well treated. On soliciting from the Admiralty the same protection and exclusive privilege which had been conceded to them by the French government, the boon was refused; and permission was given to



them to land the cable on the English coast, on the express condition "that the public should be at no cost respecting it," and that "it shall cease to be used and removed whenever their Lordships (of the Admiralty) shall think proper to order it." Undeterred by the coldness with which the government looked on their proposal, Messrs. Brett determined to persevere. As one of the conditions of the French concession was, that communication should be effected before September, 1850, it was necessary to make haste. In August, 1850, the work was commenced. A single conducting wire, invested with a thick coating of gutta-percha, was put on board the *Goliath* steam-tug, to be paid out from a large iron cylinder, round which it was coiled. The vessel started from Dover, amid the fear of the proprietors "lest this frail experimental thread should snap, and involve the undertaking in ridicule." When one end was fixed in the Eastern Railway terminus the wire was paid out and sunk by means of pieces of lead, fastened to it at distances of the sixteenth of a mile. The operation was successfully performed, and the wire landed and fixed at Cape Grisnez. When the instruments were attached to its extremities a message was sent across the Channel the same evening to Louis Napoleon, the only patron of the undertaking. Other slight messages, such as "How are you?" and "Good-night," were transmitted; but the weak little cable lived only a single day, the rope being either broken by fishermen or cut in a sharp ridge of rock.

Short as was the life of the first submarine cable, it performed a great work. By it all doubts as to the practicability of telegraphing across the ocean were done away with. Moneyed men were now found ready to subscribe capital toward enterprises of the kind; and the sneers of those who derided them as visionary schemes were at once stopped. An association formed under the auspices of Mr. J. W. Brett and Sir James Carmichael, under the name of the Submarine Telegraph Company, was organized to lay a trustworthy cable between Dover and Calais. This cable, which was constructed by



Messrs. Newall & Co., Gateshead, has served as a model for all that have been made since that time. Twenty-four miles in length, it consisted of four copper conducting wires the sixteenth of an inch in diameter. Each of these wires was covered with two thick coatings of gutta-percha, laid on in succession. The wires were then twisted together, and surrounded with a mass of spun-yarn soaked in grease and tar, so as to form a compact rope. Ten galvanized iron wires were then twisted spirally round the rope, so as to afford it complete protection. The cable was submerged in September, 1851, and a regular telegraphic communication established between Dover and Sangar, near Calais, on October 17, 1851.\* The cost of the cable was £9000, being at the rate of £360 per mile. Its promoters had every reason to congratulate themselves both on account of its desirability and the excellence of its working.

Soon after the laying of the cable between Dover and Calais a cable was laid between Holyhead and Dublin, a distance of about sixty miles. A more important enterprise, a cable from Dover to Ostend, was accomplished in 1853. After this, to use the expression of Mr. Sabine, faith expanded, and the length of the ropes grew proportionately. Many other cables, varying in length from one and a half to nearly four hundred miles, were laid between 1853 and 1857, most of which proved successful, both in their working and from a commercial point of view. The feasibility of submarine cables was now, it need scarcely be said, completely established. The great question about them still remaining to be solved was, would they be as efficacious if extended over thousands of miles as they were over hundreds? How to connect the Old World and the New was the problem which had yet to be wrought out. In what fashion, after many difficulties, and trials, and disappointments, it was at length wrought out, we shall now relate.

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\* Many interesting details on the early history of submarine cables are derived from an article on the Atlantic Telegraph, contributed by Sir David Brewster to the *North British Review* for November, 1858.

As far back as 1843, it is said, the possibility of laying an electric cable in the Atlantic from Europe to America was suggested by Professor Morse. The project slumbered for a time, but in 1854 it was revived; and at length a company, under the title of "The New York, Newfoundland, and London Company," proceeded, as a preliminary, to connect St. John's, in Newfoundland, with lines in British North America and the United States, by submerging thirteen miles of cable in the Straits of Newfoundland, and eighty-five miles in the waters of the St. Lawrence. In 1856 Mr. Cyrus Field, the vice-president of that company, visited England, and entered into an arrangement with Sir C. Bright, Mr. Brett, and Mr. Whitehouse, to execute the transatlantic telegraph. "The Atlantic Telegraph Company" was formed, with a capital of £350,000 in shares of £1000 each. The charter of the old company, which possessed for fifty years the exclusive right to land electric cables on the shores of Newfoundland and other parts of America, was made over to the new company, with all the patent-rights of Messrs. Whitehouse and Bright, who, along with Messrs. Brett and Field, agreed that compensation for their past inventions and discoveries should be wholly dependent on the success of the undertaking. The prospectus of the company was issued on November 6, 1856; and in one month the whole capital of £350,000 was subscribed. The governments of Great Britain and the United States agreed, by a contract of twenty-five years' duration, to pay to the company, till its dividend reached six per cent., a subsidy of £14,000 a year, and of £10,000 subsequently, and to furnish ships for laying down the cable.

Previous to the formation of the Atlantic Telegraph Company experiments had been made in London, which showed conclusively that it was possible to transmit a signal through over 2000 miles of circuit, so that there was no doubt upon that point. A difficult problem to settle had been the precise route by which the cable should be laid. This question, however, was set at rest by Lieutenant Maury, who discovered that

the bed of the Atlantic between Ireland and Newfoundland forms a kind of plateau, covered with soft ooze, favorably situated as a resting-place for a cable. It was accordingly decided that the cable should be laid between Valentia, Ireland, and Trinity Bay, Newfoundland; 2500 miles of cable was ordered; and in August, 1857, the first attempt was made to lay it down. The *Niagara* and the *Agamemnon* (the former lent by the United States government, the latter by the English) took 1250 miles of it on board each, and steamed forth from Valentia, the *Niagara* paying out her portion of the cable as she went. After about 380 miles had been laid the cable parted at night during a strong breeze; and as the appliances on board were not found sufficient to remedy the disaster, the two ships returned to Plymouth.

Not disheartened by the unfortunate accident which had marred their first efforts, the Atlantic Telegraph Company set themselves to raise additional capital, so that a second attempt might be made in the following year. Nine hundred miles additional cable was manufactured; and on June 10, 1858, the *Agamemnon* and *Niagara* set out from Plymouth, with the intention of this time beginning the submersion in mid-ocean, one ship proceeding toward Newfoundland, and the other toward Valentia, after splicing the ends of the cable. While sailing to the rendezvous the ships encountered a heavy gale, and it was not till June 26 that they were able to commence the submersion. After repeated difficulties, including a double fracture of the cable, on August 5 the Irish end of the wire was landed at White Strand Bay, and about the same time the American end was landed at Newfoundland. As soon as possible the eastern and western ends of the cable were put in connection with the recording instruments. On the evening of August 17, the following message was despatched from the directors in England to the directors in America:

“Europe and America are united by telegraph! Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good-will toward men.”

Immediately after this a message was sent from the Queen to the President of the United States, as follows :

*“From her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain to his Excellency the President of the United States.*

“The Queen desires to congratulate the President upon the success of this great international work, in which the Queen has taken the greatest interest. The Queen is convinced that the President will join with her in fervently hoping that the electric cable, which now already connects Great Britain with the United States, will prove an additional link between two nations whose friendship is founded upon their common interests and reciprocal esteem. The Queen has much pleasure in thus directly communicating with the President, and in renewing to him her best wishes for the prosperity of the United States.”

The Queen's message occupied in transmission sixty-five minutes. The President's reply, which consisted of one hundred and forty-three words, occupied two hours in its passage through the cable, including several “repeats” and corrections. It must have been a terrible blow to those interested in the cable when, three weeks after its submersion, it broke down entirely. It had been faulty when laid, having, as some suppose, been injured by its winter's sojourn at Plymouth ; and, although all that the highest electrical skill could do was done to get it into working order again, it persistently remained silent. Even this great misfortune was far from discomfiting the high-spirited men who had determined to unite the two worlds. Sir David Brewster spoke the mind of many when, about two months after the breakdown of the cable, he wrote, in the *North British Review* : “Our readers will already have observed that we are not among the number of those who have any doubt about the final success of the Atlantic telegraph. We cannot but hold in derision the attempts that have been made to prejudice the public mind against this magnificent enterprise. When a bridge or a viaduct falls, who ever doubted that it will re-appear on a firmer basis, and with a nobler elevation ? If the Atlantic wire has lost its insulation, who can doubt that its virtue will be restored, or that it will be re-

placed by another more perfectly insulated? If the cable has been grazed by the rude friction of its bed, or has snapped on the sharp edge of a submarine rock, its surface-wound may heal or be healed, its separated parts may be united, or a new and stronger cable may be submerged. If the earth-currents occasionally confound or overpower its speech, science has ample enough resources to extricate the genuine signal, and to reduce to subordination the pirates of the deep." Sir David Brewster was right. The cable *was* again submerged. By the exertions and by the contributions of some of its directors the Atlantic Telegraph Company was kept alive till 1864. By the time that year had been reached several huge submarine cables—to which we shall afterward refer—had been laid; so that the distrust with which capitalists had since 1858 regarded such enterprises had almost disappeared. Money accordingly was again forth-coming, and the construction of a new cable was entered on. In its manufacture nothing was left to chance; every part of it was severely tested, both electrically and otherwise; and the experience gained in other undertakings of the kind was made use of to give it the most perfect form possible. The cable was 2300 miles in length, weighing over 4000 tons, and it was resolved to employ the *Great Eastern*, then lying unemployed, to carry it. "By this arrangement," writes Mr. Bright, "the whole of the cable could be stowed in one ship, while without her aid four ships of the largest size would scarcely have sufficed, and, as in 1858, the cable would have had to have been much smaller in size. Even with present experience it would be a most dangerous experiment to attempt to lay a cable piecemeal across the Atlantic from a series of vessels, as rough weather might at any time prevent the ends being successively joined as each ship finished its portion of the task."

In addition to the care taken in the making of the cable, new paying-out apparatus was devised; and on July 23, 1865, the *Great Eastern* started on her journey with every hope of success. She had only proceeded seventy-five miles on her way



when a fault was discovered in the insulation of the cable. This was rectified, and for a time all went well. On July 29, however, after 716 miles had been laid, a similar fault was discovered. It also was rectified; but on August 2, after 1186 miles of cable had been paid out, a third case of loss of insulation was reported. While the *Great Eastern* was drawing in the cable to get at the injured part, by an unfortunate mischance the cable snapped, and the end sunk to the bottom. After repeated vain and disastrous attempts to catch hold of it by means of five-armed grapnels, in course of which all the grappling-rope on board the ship was consumed, the *Great Eastern* was reluctantly compelled to return to England. Thus a third time had the attempt failed to connect England and America by means of a submarine cable.

As those conversant with such matters were generally of opinion that with stronger tackle the lost cable might be recovered, this disaster did not discourage the managers of the undertaking so much as might have been expected. A new company, the Anglo-American, was organized to assist the Atlantic Telegraph Company in carrying out the scheme, and fresh capital was readily forth-coming. A new cable, differing considerably from the former one, was made, as well as a sufficient length to complete the cable of 1865, should the end of it be recovered. All preparations having been made, the *Great Eastern*, accompanied by H.M.S. *Terrible* and the steamers *Albany* and *Medway*, which were to assist in the submersion, and in fishing for the lost cable, set out on July 13, 1866. In spite of two or three small mischances, the expedition this time was perfectly successful; and on July 27 the *Great Eastern* safely entered the harbor of Heart's Content, Newfoundland. On the following day this message was sent by the Queen to the President of the United States:

"The Queen congratulates the President on the successful completion of an undertaking which she hopes may serve as an additional bond of union between the United States and England."

To which the President (Andrew Johnson), on July 30, replied as follows :

“The President of the United States acknowledges with profound gratification the receipt of her Majesty’s despatch, and cordially reciprocates the hope that the cable, that now unites the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, may serve to strengthen and to perpetuate peace and amity between the Government of England and the Republic of the United States.”

Similar congratulatory communications passed between the Earl of Carnarvon and the Governor-general of Canada, and between the Mayor of Vancouver’s Island and the Lord Mayor of London.

The cable having thus been satisfactorily laid, the *Great Eastern* and the vessels accompanying it commenced the other and not less arduous part of their operation—the search for the broken cable of 1865. After repeated disappointments—which left the expedition, as one of the party expressed it, not only “shattered in ropes, but nearly shattered in hopes”—on September 1, 1866, the cable was recovered; and on the following day a message was sent through it to Valentia :

“*Canning to Glass, Valentia.*—I have much pleasure in speaking to you through the 1865 cable. Just going to make splice.”

The end of the found cable was then spliced to the spare cable on board, and laid to Newfoundland. This second line of communication with America was completed on September 8. So far from the 1865 cable having been injured by its year’s sojourn at the bottom of the Atlantic, it was found to test better than the cable of 1866, owing to the fact that the gutta-percha surrounding the conducting wires had become gradually consolidated by the enormous weight of water.

On the return of those connected with this great expedition to England many of the most distinguished of them were entertained at public dinners, and knighthood and other honors were conferred by her Majesty on a few of the leaders of the undertaking. The following passage from the Queen’s Speech before proroguing Parliament gives prominence to the univer-

sal feeling of the country about the great work that had just been accomplished :

“ Her Majesty has great satisfaction in congratulating the country and the world at large on the successful accomplishment of the great design of connecting Europe and America by the means of an electric telegraph. It is hardly possible to anticipate the full extent of the benefits which may be conferred on the human race by this signal triumph of scientific enterprise, and her Majesty has pleasure in expressing her deep sense of what is due to the private company which, in spite of repeated failure and discouragement, has at length, for the second time, succeeded in establishing direct communications between the two continents. Her Majesty trusts that no impediment may occur to interrupt the success of this great undertaking, calculated, as it undoubtedly is, to cement yet closer the ties which bind her Majesty’s North American Colonies to their mother country, and to promote the unrestricted intercourse and friendly feeling which it is most desirable to promote between her Majesty’s dominions and the great Republic of the United States.”

It may be mentioned that for three months the tariff for a message by the Atlantic cable was twenty pounds for twenty words or under. On November 1 this somewhat exorbitant rate was reduced to ten pounds. In 1869 a French cable was laid from Brest to St. Pierre. In July, 1881, a cable connecting Sennen Cove, Land’s End, with Dover Bay, Nova Scotia, a distance of 2511 nautical miles, was completed. It was constructed by Messrs. Siemens, Brothers, & Co., on American account.

While the long struggle to lay an Atlantic cable was going on several other works of the same kind, of almost equal magnitude and importance, were carried through, some of them successfully. Of these the largest was a cable from Suez to Kurrachee (India), of the vast length of 3509 miles, laid in 1859-’60. The art of laying long submarine cables was then, comparatively speaking, in its infancy ; and, partly through inadequate workmanship, partly through defective paying out,

this cable, after costing about £800,000, proved a total failure. In 1861 a cable, containing only one conducting wire, was successfully laid between Malta and Alexandria (1535 miles). Equally successful was a cable laid in the Persian Gulf from Fao to Kurrachee (1450 miles) in 1864. One cannot sufficiently admire the genius and enterprise displayed by many of our countrymen in the matter of submarine cables. Repeated heavy pecuniary losses, and total or partial failures, seem only to have given them fresh courage to commence again the arduous operations by which at length success was achieved.

The uses to which the electric telegraph has been applied are well-nigh innumerable. Without its assistance railways could never have attained the speed and safety which they at present possess. By means of its almost instantaneous signals it can be known whether or not the line is clear, and hence innumerable accidents are prevented. An interesting case illustrative of this is quoted by Mr. Bright in his edition of Lardner's book on the electric telegraph. On New-year's-day, 1850, a catastrophe, which it is fearful to contemplate, was prevented by the aid of the telegraph. A collision had occurred to an empty train at Gravesend; and the driver having leaped from his engine, the latter started alone at full speed to London. Notice was immediately given by the telegraph to London and other stations; and while the line was kept clear, an engine and other arrangements were prepared as a buttress to receive the runaway. The superintendent of the railway also started down the line on an engine; and on passing the runaway he reversed his engine, and had it transferred at the next crossing to the up-line, so as to be in the rear of the fugitive. He then started in chase; and, on overtaking the other, he ran into it at speed, and the driver of his engine took possession of the fugitive, and all danger was at an end. Twelve stations were passed in safety; it passed through Woolwich at fifteen miles an hour; it was within a couple of miles of London before it was arrested. Had its approach been unknown, the mere money value of the damage it would have caused might have

equalled the cost of the whole line of telegraphs. They have thus paid, or in a large part paid, for their erection. As a contrast to this, an engine, some months previously, started from New Cross toward London. The Brighton Company had then no telegraphs, and its approach could not be made known. Providentially, the arrival platform was clear. It ran in, carrying the fixed buffer before it, and knocked down, with frightful violence, the wall of the parcels-office.

Other very convenient, though less important, uses of the telegraph as regards railways consist in the ready means it gives for the recovery of lost luggage, etc. "Passing over," writes Mr. Walker, "the black leather bag which some one every day appears to leave in some train, passengers have recovered luggage of the most miscellaneous character by means of the telegraph. In the trains have been left a pair of spectacles and a pig, an umbrella and Layard's 'Nineveh,' a purse and a barrel of oysters, a great-coat and a baby, and boxes and trunks, *et id genus omne*, without number."

In the ready detection of crime the telegraph affords a valuable protection to society. The celerity of its movements baffles the astuteness of the acutest wrong-doer, and often puts him into the hands of justice at the time he is least expecting it. From innumerable anecdotes illustrative of this we select one told by Mr. Bright. One night, at ten o'clock, the chief cashier of the Bank of England received a notice from Liverpool to stop certain notes. The next morning the descriptions were placed upon a card, and given to the proper officer, to watch that no person exchanged them for gold. Within ten minutes they were presented at the counter by an apparent foreigner, who pretended not to speak a word of English. A clerk in the office who spoke German interrogated him, when he declared that he had received them at the Exchange at Antwerp six weeks before. Upon reference to the books, however, it appeared that the notes had only been issued from the bank about fourteen days, and therefore he was at once detected as the utterer of a falsehood. The terrible Forrester was sent for,



who forthwith locked him up, and the notes were detained. A letter was at once written to Liverpool, and the real owner of the notes came up to town on Monday morning. He stated that he was about to sail for America, and that while at a hotel he had exhibited the notes. The person in custody advised him to stow the notes in a portmanteau, as Liverpool was a very dangerous place for a man to walk about in with so much money in his pocket. The owner of the property had no sooner left the house than his adviser broke open the portmanteau and stole the property. The thief was taken to the Mansion House, and could not make any defence. The sessions were then going on at the Old Bailey. By a little after ten the next morning the thief was found guilty, and sentenced to seven years' transportation.

The telegraph forms the most valuable assistant the Press has; and to the Press, on the other hand, the telegraph owes its most steady supporter. When the Atlantic cable was first opened, and the charges were enormously high, the *New York Herald* was spirited enough to pay over eight hundred pounds each for two despatches, one giving the King of Prussia's speech after peace with Austria, and the other particulars of the prize-fight between Mace and Goss. Such instances are by no means rare. The *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* maintain, at great expense, a special wire each from Paris; while almost all the leading daily provincial journals have special wires from London, which, with the many incidental expenses connected with them, cost no trifling amount. In connection with "special wires," the following amusing anecdote is related. It must be remembered that the event happened a good many years ago: "Four Scotch newspapers have each a special telegraph wire between London and Scotland—the *Scotsman* and the *Daily Review*, in Edinburgh; and the *Herald* and the *Mail*, in Glasgow—by which important news items are nightly transmitted to the respective journals. Whether there is any great necessity for such expensive newspaper enterprise it is not our province to inquire; it is enough for our purpose to say that 'spe-

cial wiring' has become a feature of Scottish journalism, if it is not also a millstone round its neck. The other night, Mr. Moffat, who transmits news from London to the *Glasgow Daily Mail*, arrived late at the Gresham Street telegraph-station, and found, to his dismay, that the gate was shut and bolted, and the night-porter fast asleep. Knocking was of no use, kicking had as little effect; the porter slept the sleep of a man with an easy conscience. What was to be done? The doughty Scot knew that high up in the building a telegraph-clerk waited anxiously for the last of his 'copy;' and he farther knew, to his cost, that there were pains and penalties attached to the non-transmission of the 'latest intelligence.' At length a bright idea struck him. He ran to Threadneedle Street, telegraphed to Glasgow that the 'special wire' porter was asleep, and requested the clerk at the Glasgow end to let the Gresham Street clerk know that such was the case. This involved telegraphing nearly a thousand miles; but, nevertheless, within ten minutes the Gresham Street telegraph-clerk received the instructions, came down-stairs, awoke the slumbering official, and gave admission to the excited journalist and his batch of copy."

The only two other uses of the telegraph we need touch on are its value to commercial men, and its conveyance of "weather-warnings." In this country, and, we believe, more especially in America—where the telegraph has been always more taken advantage of than here—men of business, especially stock-brokers and the like, use the telegraph almost as much as the mail. The telegraph, as a weather prophet, is familiar to every reader from the weather report given in almost all the daily newspapers, and in this character has rendered important services to meteorological science.

In 1868 the "Telegraphs Act" was introduced into Parliament, to enable the government to purchase the telegraphs. The idea was no new one. We read in the "Life of Sir Rowland Hill" that in 1852 he received a paper drawn up by Captain Galton, recommending that the Post-office should become manager of the whole telegraphic system. As the communi-

cation was private, Rowland Hill replied accordingly, giving, however, a favorable opinion of the project, and leaving Captain Galton to take such farther steps as he thought best. Captain Galton's plan was submitted to the Board of Trade, and thence transferred to the Post-office, but objected to by the Postmaster-general of the day. A few years later, however, the project was revived within the Post-office by Mr. Frederick Baines, who had at one time occupied a post of considerable importance under one of the telegraphic companies. This gentleman drew up an elaborate memorandum, comprising a complete plan, and was referred by the Postmaster-general to the Treasury, but without any result at the time. The act introduced in 1868 did not contain any provision for a government monopoly in telegraphs. This defect was, however, remedied in the statute of 1869; and, toward the close of 1880, the government, by their successful action against the Edison Telephone Company, showed conclusively that they were prepared to stand by their rights. The purchase of the telegraphs by the government was completed in 1870, at the somewhat exorbitant cost of over ten millions, the various telegraphic companies exacting considerably more than the real value of their stock. For several years complaints were loud and general that the government had shown reckless extravagance in the transaction; but however this may be, few will be disposed to deny that on the whole the acquisition of the telegraphs by the state was a great public boon. The system was largely extended, and the adoption of a uniform rate of tariff was a very considerable convenience.

There seems some hope that in the course of another year sixpenny telegrams will be introduced, which will doubtless lead to a great increase of business. It may give some idea of the vast use now made of the telegraph by all classes when we say that no fewer than twenty-eight millions of postal telegraph envelopes are required every year.





## INDEX.

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- ADAM, Dr., of Edinburgh High School, 123.
- Adhesive stamps, Rowland Hill's first suggestion of, 223; first issue of, 230.
- Advertisement duty first imposed, 291; Douglas Jerrold on the, 297.
- Advertisement duty, the, and education, 300, 305; ten objections to, 301; how it injured provincial papers, 302; Mr. Milner Gibson's speech on, 304; and charitable schemes, 305; Mr. Gladstone's speech proposing the repeal of, 306; repeal of, 308.
- Advertising, illegitimate modes of, Mr. Francis and Mr. Ewart on, 299; *Times* on, 303.
- Agricultural Protection Society, the, 270.
- Aikin's, Dr. J., account of Howard, 31.
- "Albert Lunel," Brougham's, 163.
- Allen, Mr., 232.
- Althorpe, Lord, on Brougham's speech on the Reform Bill, 148.
- American journals, number of advertisements in, 298.
- Ampère's electric telegraph, 452.
- Anglo-American Telegraph Company, the, organized, 470.
- Anti-Corn-law League, Brougham's attack on the, 165.
- Anti-Corn-law League, origin of the, 255.
- Anti-Corn-law League Circular*, publication of the, 256.
- Anti-Corn-law League, Mr. Bright on the orderliness of the, 257.
- Aristocracy, Brougham's defence of the, 167.
- Arundel, Romilly returned member for, 114.
- Ashworth, Henry, Cobden's Conversation with, 254.
- Association for the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge, origin of the, 294.
- Atlantic cable of 1857, 467; of 1858, 467; of 1865, 469; of 1866, 470; Queen's Speech on the successful laying of, 472; charges for messages by, 472.
- Atlantic Telegraph Company, formation of the, 466.
- BABINGTON's labors with Wilberforce, 66.
- Baldwin's, Alderman, opposition to the paper duty, 329.
- Baring's, Mr., free-trade proposals, 260.
- Bastile, Howard's endeavor to enter the, 29.
- Beaconsfield, Lord, on the condition of England in 1842, 264.
- Bell, Henry, and the "Comet," 437.
- Benevolence, Wilberforce's unbounded, 77.
- Bentham, Jeremy, on Howard, 46; and Brougham, 135.
- Bicêtre, Romilly's visit to the, 100.
- "Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen," R. Chambers's, 185.
- Birkbeck, Dr. George, Brougham on, 158.
- Blunt, Walter, 197.
- Bohn's, H. G., opposition to the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 338.
- "Book of Scotland," William Chambers's, 185.
- "Book of Days," Robert Chambers's, 193.
- Book-post, origin of the, 238; evasions of the, 238.
- Boswell on Matthew Boulton, 406.
- Boulton's, Matthew, first interview with Watt, 403.



- Boulton, Matthew, letter of, to Watt, 405.  
 Bovill's, Mr., amendment to the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 346.  
 Bramber, Wilberforce's election for, 80.  
 Brett, Messrs., and submarine telegraphy, 463.  
 Bridewells, state of, in 1774, 27.  
 Bright's, John, advice to the working-men of Rochdale, 269.  
 Bright, John, enters the House of Commons, 275; early years of, 255; as an orator, 275; on the advertisement duty, 307; on the stamp duty, 310, 320; on the opposition of the Lords to the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 351.  
 Brighton Railway Company, Rowland Hill appointed director of the, 233.  
 Bristol, Romilly's nomination for, 113.  
 Brougham as a law-reformer, 147; as a talker, 169; on the stamp duty, 309; on Watt in private life, 409; on the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, 426.  
 Brougham's claims to remembrance, 119; juvenile peccadilloes, 124; legal attainments, 128; self-confidence, 129; "Autobiography," 135; occasional tawdry rhetoric, 136; unceasing toil, 137; marriage, 137; inconsistency, 139; rectorial address at Glasgow, 140; love of popular applause, 151; death, false report of, 161; praise of his own consistency, 166.  
 Bruce Castle, Rowland Hill's school at, 217.  
 Burke's eulogium on Howard, 11.  
 Burke on Wilberforce's speech on the slave-trade, 64.  
 Burns, W. Chambers's edition of the songs of, 182.  
 Burton, John Hill, on the *Penny Encyclopædia*, 200; on the Useful Knowledge Society's Biographical Dictionary, 202.  
 Buxton, T. F., appointed Wilberforce's heir in the antislavery crusade, 81.  
 Byron's "Hours of Idleness," Brougham's review of, 126.  
 "C. M.'s" scheme of telegraphy, 445.  
 Cambridge, state of, in the eighteenth century, 53.  
 Camelford, Brougham's return as member for, 127.  
 Campbell, Lord, on Brougham's popularity, 151.  
 Capital punishment, Romilly's letter on, 97.  
 Cardington, Howard's residence at, 20.  
 Carlyle's, Thomas, estimate of Howard, 44.  
 Carlyle, Thomas, on the Corn-laws, 262.  
 Caroline, Queen, Brougham's advocacy of, 135.  
 Carruthers, Robert, on Robert Chambers, 194.  
 Cassell, John, 204; on the paper duty, 335.  
*Cassell's Family Paper*, character of, 206.  
 Cecil, Lord Robert, on the paper duty, 341.  
 Chambers, Robert, education of, 175; begins business as a bookseller, 180; on his early struggles, 180, 181; as a poet, 184; marriage of, 185; "Essays" of, 189; "Life and Works of Burns," edited by, 191; as a man of science, 192; on the paper duty, 325.  
 Chambers, William, education of, 175; apprenticeship of, 178; efforts to acquire knowledge made by, 179.  
*Chambers's Journal*, prospectus of, 186; introductory address to, 187; circulation of, 188; successive editors of, 195.  
 Chambers's "Information for the People," 190; "Educational Course," 190; "Papers for the People," 190; "Miscellany," 191; "Cyclopædia of English Literature," 191; "Encyclopædia," 191.  
 Chappé's, Claude, telegraphic apparatus, 442.  
*Charlotte Dundas*, voyage of the, 434.  
 Charter, the "Six Points" of the, 268.  
 Chartists, opposition of, to the Anti-Corn-law League, 260, 266.  
 Chatmoss, draining of, 421.  
 Cheap periodicals, Sir G. C. Lewis on the morality of, 315.  
 Cherson, Howard's death at, 44.  
 Childhood, terrors of Romilly's, 90.  
 City of London, Rowland Hill presented with the freedom of the, 241.  
 Clayton's, Dr. John, experiments with coal-gas, 368.  
 Clarkson's labors to abolish the slave-trade, 59.  
 Clarkson, Wilberforce's first interview with, 60.  
 Clarkson's embassy to France, 65.

- Clegg, Samuel, and gas-lighting, 376; becomes engineer to Winsor's Company, 381.
- Clermont*, voyage of the, 435.
- Coal first used in England, 366.
- Cobbett's, William, opposition to the Corn-laws, 251.
- Cobden, Richard, birth and education of, 251; becomes a manufacturer, 252; first pamphlets of, 252; begins his efforts to repeal the Corn-laws, 254; first speech of, 263; on Sir Robert Peel's new Corn-law, 267; Peel's tribute to, 288; unfortunate speculations of, 289; negotiates commercial treaty with France, 289; on the advertisement duty, 307.
- Codification, Brougham's appeal in favor of, 142.
- Coleridge, S. T., anecdote of, 220.
- Collet's, C. D., efforts to repeal the stamp duty, 317.
- "Colonial Policy of the European States," Brougham's work on the, 127.
- Commerce, imaginary, 92.
- Constable's, Archibald, visit to Abbotsford, 171; explains his great scheme to Scott, 172; "Miscellany," 174.
- Convict hulks, Howard's account of, 36.
- Cooke, W. F., 457.
- Cooke and Wheatstone, dispute between, 458.
- Corn-law of 1815, 248; of 1822, 249; of 1828, 249.
- Corn-laws, repeal of, carried, 288.
- Corporation charities, Bentham's inquiry into the abuses of, 134.
- Covent Garden Theatre, Anti-Corn-law meetings of the League at, 276; Anti-Corn-law League bazaar at, 281.
- Criminal Code, Romilly's efforts to ameliorate the, 110, 111, 114.
- Criminal Law, discrepancy between the letter and practice of the, 115.
- Crompton, T. B., on the paper duty, 329.
- Cugnot's steam-carriage, 411.
- Cumberland, Duke of, Brougham's implied insult to the, 167.
- D'ALEMBERT, Romilly's interview with, 96.
- Davy, Sir Humphry, and gas-lighting, 381.
- De Caus's, Solomon, work on "Moving Forces," 393.
- Derby, Earl of, deputation to, on the paper duty, 334; deputation to, deprecating his opposition to the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 353.
- Diderot, Romilly's interview with, 96.
- Disraeli, Mr., attacks on Peel by, 280; on the advertisement duty, 307; on the paper duty, 311; opposition of, to Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 347.
- Dixon's, Hepworth, "Life of Howard" quoted, 24.
- Dockwra, Mr., 232.
- Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," Wilberforce's perusal of, 57.
- Domestic disputes, Howard's method of avoiding, 19.
- Drummond, Mr., murder of, 270.
- Drury Lane Theatre, meetings of the Anti-Corn-law League at, 272.
- Dumont, Romilly's friendship for, 96.
- Dundas's opposition to the immediate abolition of the slave-trade, 68.
- Dundas's, Lord, experiments in steam navigation, 434.
- Durham's, Earl of, quarrel with Brougham, 153; Brougham's attack on, 160.
- EAMES, John, 15.
- Edinburgh, banquet to Brougham, etc., at, 152.
- Edinburgh Review*, the, Brougham's contributions to, 125; and progress, 126.
- Edinburgh University, Brougham appointed Chancellor of, 168.
- Electors, address of the Anti-Corn-law League to the, 261.
- Electricity, early notices of, 443.
- Electro-magnetism, Oersted's discovery of, 451.
- Electric telegraph, who invented the, 459; first line of, in England, 460.
- Ellenborough, Lord, on the Newspaper Stamp-act, 306.
- Elliott's, Ebenezer, "Corn-law Rhymes," 250.
- Eloquence, Parliamentary, in the eighteenth century, 48.
- "Encyclopædia Britannica," R. Chambers's first reading of the, 176.
- Etonian*, commencement of the, 197.
- Excise regulations with reference to paper-makers, 328.
- FARMERS, the, and the Corn-laws, 279.
- First railway to London opened, 427.

- Fiscal restrictions on the press, reduction of, by Lord Melbourne, 292; outcry against, 293.
- Fitch's steam-vessel, 432.
- Fox's, Charles, desire for slave-trade abolition, 74.
- Fox, W. J., as an orator, 276.
- Francis, John, on the paper duty, 335; testimonial to, 358.
- Franklin, Benjamin, Romilly's interview with, 93.
- Free-trade, Adam Smith on, 247.
- Freedom of the press, Brougham's bill to secure, 134.
- Freehold estates of persons dying indebted, Romilly's bill to enable persons to recover their debts from the, 108.
- French Revolution, the, how it affected slave-trade abolition, 68; Romilly's views regarding, 101.
- French Republic, Brougham's desire to become a citizen of the, 166.
- Frost's, Thomas, interview with Cassell, 205.
- Fry's, Elizabeth, labors in prisons, 46.
- Fulton's, Robert, experiments in steam navigation, 435.
- GALVANI'S great discovery, 448.
- Gambling, Wilberforce's reason for abandoning, 55.
- Garay's, Blasco de, steam vessel, 431.
- Gas, first street lighted by, 379; explosion of, at Westminster, 383.
- Gas companies, ruinous competition among, 386.
- Gas and the electric light, 387.
- Gas-lighting, progress of, 377; early opposition to, 378.
- Gas-light and Coke Company, formation of the, 380; absurd notions entertained of, 382.
- Gas-meter, inventor of the, 384.
- Gauss and Weber's telegraph, 456.
- "Gazetteer of Scotland," W. Chambers's, 185.
- Gibson, T. Milner, proposal, 1850, to repeal the taxes on knowledge, 295; efforts of, to repeal the paper duty, 331, 332; testimonial to, 357.
- Gladstone, W. E., on the paper duty, 332; proposes to repeal the paper duty, 336; on the repeal of the paper duty, 357.
- Glasgow University, Brougham appointed Lord Rector of, 140.
- Goethe on the earthquake at Lisbon, 17.
- Great Eastern*, the, employed in laying the Atlantic cable, 469.
- Greenock News Clout*, the, 317.
- Grenville's, Lord, protest against the Corn-law of 1815, 248.
- Grey's, Earl, argument against slave-trade abolition, 64.
- Guildhall lighted by gas, 384.
- HALES'S, Dr. Stephen, "Vegetable Statics," 369.
- Hall's, Captain, recommendation of gummed envelopes, 230.
- Hazlewood school, system of education at, 216.
- Henry, Dr., and gas-lighting, 377.
- Hero of Alexandria, steam toy invented by, 393.
- Hetherington, Henry, and the *Poor Man's Guardian*, 292.
- Hetton colliery, railway opened at, 415.
- Hill, Rowland, father of, 210; mother of, 213; childhood of, 213; as an educationist, 215; inventive genius of, 218; engaged by government, 225; dismissal from office of, 231; testimonial to, 234; on Post-office improvement, 235; appointed Secretary to the Post-office, 240; retirement of, from the Post-office, 241.
- "History of the Rebellion," Robert Chambers's, 185.
- Hood, Thomas, on Rowland Hill's dismissal from office, 232.
- House of Commons, Howard's examination before the, 26.
- House of Lords, Brougham's unpopularity in the, 145.
- Household Narrative of Current Events*, government prosecution of the, 312.
- Howard's, John, parents, 12; education, 15; appearance and mode of life, 34.
- Hull, society at, in the eighteenth century, 52.
- Hull's, Jonathan, patent for ship propulsion by steam, 432.
- Hume, Joseph, 259.
- Hunt, Leigh, and Robert Chambers, 189.
- Huskisson, Mr., accidental death of, 425.
- ILLUMINATION by gas in 1814, 383.
- "Illustrations of the Author of 'Waverley,'" Robert Chambers's, 183.
- Immoral periodicals, short life of, 316.

- Institute of France, Brougham appointed member of the, 163.  
 Irish prisons, state of, in 1775, 28.  
 Isle of Wight, Romilly's projects while staying at, 109.
- "JACKSON v. Morse," Mr. Sabine on, 455.  
 Jailers, fees to, 25.  
 Jeffrey, Lord, on Watt in private life, 409.  
 Johnson's, Dr., opinion of Voltaire and Rousseau, 23.  
 Johnson, Dr., Brougham's sketch of, 166.  
 Josephus, Tam Fleck's readings from, 175.  
 Jouffroy's, Marquis de, steam-vessel, 432.  
 Justice, a miscarriage of, 107.
- Kaleidoscope*, the, origin of, 182.  
 Kidderminster, statue to Sir Rowland Hill at, 242.  
 Killingworth, George Stephenson's repair of an engine at, 414.  
 Kimber's persecution of Wilberforce, 69.  
 Knaresborough, Brougham's election for, 143.  
 Knight, Charles, on the paper duty, 324.  
 Knight's "History of England," 204;  
 "Shilling Volumes," 203.  
*Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, origin of, 193.  
 Knout, the punishment of the, 39.  
 Kurrachee (India) submarine cable, failure of the, 473.
- LACKINGTON'S, James, "Autobiography," 181.  
 Lafayette, Wilberforce's impression of, 56.  
 Lancashire, the great strike in, 269.  
 Law reform, Brougham's great speech on, 141.  
 Lawyers, want of popular interest in the lives of great, 86.  
 Lazarettos, Howard's work on, 42.  
 Le Bon introduces gas - lighting in France, 373.  
 Leeds, Henrietta, Howard's marriage to, 19; death of, 21.  
 Lesage's plan for an electric telegraph, 447.  
 Letters, illicit conveyance of, 220.  
 Lewis, Sir G. C., on the stamp duty, 318;  
 on the paper duty, 332.  
 Libel on the Regent, 132; Brougham's bill on the law of, 134.
- Library system, the, 207.  
 Lichfield, Earl of, on penny postage, 223.  
 Lisbon, earthquake at, in 1775, 17.  
 Literature, Wilberforce's opinions on, 78.  
 Liverpool, Brougham's candidature for, 132.  
 Liverpool and Manchester Railway projected, 418; Stephenson appointed engineer of, 421; opening of, 424; success of, 426.  
 Locomotive contest at Rainhill, conditions of the, 424; result of the, 424.  
 Loidore, Mrs., Howard's marriage to, 16.  
 Long, George, 202.  
 Loughborough, Lord Chancellor, on Wilberforce's "Practical Christianity," 71.  
 Lowther's, Sir James, account of coal-gas, 370.  
 Lyndhurst's, Lord, opposition to the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 355.
- MABERLEY'S, Colonel, antipathy to penny postage, 235.  
 Macaulay on Brougham as a Parliamentary speaker, 129; on Brougham as a literary man, 163; on Sir Robert Peel's New Corn-law, 266.  
 Macaulay's estimate of Brougham in 1831, 148.  
 Mackay, Charles, on railways, 440.  
 Mackintosh's, Sir James, letter of congratulation to Wilberforce, 75; encomium on Wilberforce in private life, 77; on Wilberforce as a reformer, 82.  
 Manchester, Anti-Corn-law banquet at, 258; bazaar on behalf of the Anti-Corn-law League at, 266; Town Hall, great meeting of the Anti-Corn-law League at, 286.  
 Mansion House memorial fund to Sir Rowland Hill, 241.  
 Marshalsea, the, state of, in 1728, 24.  
 Martineau, Harriet, on Brougham, 169; on Rowland Hill, 212; on Cobden's first speech, 263; on the bazaar at Manchester, 282.  
 Mechanics' Institutions, origin of, 158; Brougham's labors in behalf of, 158; results of, 159.  
 Melbourne, Lord, on the repeal of the Corn-laws, 259.  
 Melbourne Ministry, defeat of the, 261.  
 "Memoirs of Romilly," summary of the, 83.



- "Men of Letters of the time of George III.," Brougham's work on, 164.
- Microcosm*, the, 196.
- Middle passage, horrors of the, 63.
- Miles's, Sir W., opposition to the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 340.
- Milk company, Wilberforce's loss by a, 84.
- Miller's, Patrick, experiments in steam navigation, 433.
- Milner, Isaac, 57.
- Milner, Joseph, 52.
- Mimicry, Wilberforce's power of, 77.
- Mirabeau, Romilly's introduction to, 98.
- Money-order transaction, a, 237.
- Monteagle's, Lord, opposition to the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 349.
- More's, Hannah, opinion of Wilberforce, 58.
- Morley, John, on Cobden's first pamphlets, 253.
- Morning Post*, the, on Cobden, 274.
- Morse's telegraphic inventions, 452, 459.
- Mudie and the *Cornucopia*, 186.
- Mulready envelope, the, 228.
- Murdoch's, William, first experiments with gas, 372; exhibition of gas-lights at Soho Foundry, 372; report on gas-lighting, 375; model locomotive, 411.
- NAPIER, Macvey, Brougham's letters to, 155.
- Napoleon, Romilly's opinion of, in 1802, 104.
- National Assembly of France, disorderliness of, 101.
- National education, Brougham's advocacy of, 160.
- Newcomen's, Thomas, steam-engine, 395.
- Newspaper Press Association, origin of the, 295.
- Newton, John, on Wilberforce's "Practical Christianity," 71.
- Northcote's, Sir Stafford, motion against the third reading of the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 347.
- OBLITERATION of stamps, difficulty of, 230.
- O'Connell, Daniel, on penny postage, 225.
- Oil-gas, Taylor's patent for, 385.
- Orders in Council, Brougham's efforts to repeal the, 131.
- PALMER, Mr., 232.
- Paper duty, first imposition of the, 291; as affecting publishers, 324; as affecting authors, Charles Knight on the, 326; as affecting paper-makers, 328; as affecting grocers and manufacturers, 329; first efforts to repeal the, 331; condemned as impolitic by the House of Commons, 333; four trade reasons for the repeal of, 354.
- Paper Duty Repeal Bill, second reading of, discussion on, 342; second reading of, carried, 342; third reading of, 347; opposition of the Lords to, 349; rejected by the Lords, 355; Lord Palmerston's resolutions with reference to its rejection by the Lords, 356.
- Paper duty, the, repealed, 357; results of the repeal of, as regards books, 359; results of, as regards periodicals, 361.
- Paper-makers, opposition of, to the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 343.
- Paper-making materials, 345, 346.
- Papin's, Denis, invention of the safety-valve, 394; steam-vessel, 432.
- Parcel post, Rowland Hill's recommendation of a, 239.
- Paris first lighted by gas, 387.
- Parish School Bill, introduction of Brougham's, 136.
- "Passages of a Working Life," Charles Knight's, 195.
- Patriarchal authority, Howard's notion of, 20.
- Pease, Edward, and Stephenson, 415.
- Peel, Sir Robert, resigns office, 235.
- Peel's, Sir Robert, New Corn-law, 266; Budget of 1842, 267; Budget of 1845, 280; letter to Sir James Graham, 284; scheme for repealing the Corn-laws, 287.
- Peel and Cobden, dispute between, 271.
- Penalties, Rowland Hill's strict enforcement of, 233.
- Penny Encyclopædia*, origin of the, 200.
- Penny Magazine*, origin of the, 200.
- Penny postage proposed in Parliament, 225; and the Anti-Corn-law League, 227; introduction of, 228.
- Penzance, description of prison at, 30.
- Persian Gulf cable, success of the, 473.
- "Peterloo Massacre," the, 249.
- Photography, Brougham's discovery of the principle of, 123.
- Pitt, William, great speech on the slave-



- trade by, 67; sincerity of, in advocating slave-trade abolition, 70; Wilberforce's defence of, 79; on Adam Smith, 244.
- Plague, Howard's endeavors to combat the, 40.
- Plain Englishman*, Charles Knight's co-editorship of, 197.
- Politics and law, Brougham's opinion on the incompatibility of, 128.
- "Popular Rhymes of Scotland," Robert Chambers's work on the, 184.
- Portable Gas Company, the, 386.
- Porteous, Bp., on Wilberforce's speech on the slave-trade, 64; on Wilberforce's "Practical Christianity," 71.
- Postal reform, Rowland Hill's pamphlet on, 222.
- Postal telegraphs, 477.
- Post-office charges, anecdotes of, 219.
- Post-office commission, Rowland Hill's evidence before the, 222.
- Post-office statistics, 242.
- Potato famine of 1845, 283.
- "Practical Christianity," publication of Wilberforce's work on, 70.
- Præd, William Mackworth, 197.
- Prague, Howard's visit to the Capuchin Friars at, 38.
- Press, the, of the world, 364.
- Price, Dr. Richard, Howard's early friendship for, 15; assists Howard in preparing his work on prisons, 31.
- Priestley, Dr., on coal-gas, 371.
- Prince of Wales, Romilly's introduction to the, 105.
- Printing establishments, increase in the number of, 361.
- Prisons, Howard's work on, 32.
- Progress of the Press, statistics of, 360-365.
- "Public Education," Rowland Hill's work on, 215.
- Punch* on the opposition of the Lords to the repeal of the paper duty, 352.
- Quarterly Review*, the, on penny postage, 226; on locomotives, 390.
- Queenborough, Romilly returned member for, 106.
- Quiver*, the, character of, 206.
- RAILWAYS first used, 411; early objections to, 419; advantages of, 439.
- Railway accidents, statistics of, 430.
- Railway progress, statistics of, 430.
- Railway tickets, 430.
- Rawling, Mr., on the opposition of the Lords to the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 351.
- Reform Bill, Brougham's speech on the, 147; reaction which followed the passing of the, 152.
- Registration fee for letters, 230.
- Religious Tract Society, the, and the paper duty, 342.
- Ritchie, David, W. Chambers's account of, 182.
- Robertson's, Dr., Brougham's connection with, 122.
- Robison's, Professor, intercourse with Watt, 400.
- "Rocket," the, victory of, 424.
- Roebuck's, Dr., intercourse with Watt, 403.
- Rome, celebration of the Stephenson centenary at, 429.
- Romilly's parentage, 88; education, 91; legal studies, 95; marriage, 103.
- Romilly on Brougham, 133.
- Romilly as an orator, 117.
- Romilly, suicide of, 118.
- Royal Society, Howard appointed Fellow of the, 19.
- Rumsey's steam-vessel, 432.
- Ruskin, John, on railways, 438.
- Russell, Lord John, on Brougham, 154; and cheap newspapers, 296.
- Russell's, Lord John, motion to abolish the "sliding-scale," 260; declaration of free-trade principles, 282, 284; failure to form an administration, 286.
- ST. LEONARDS'S, Lord, his epigram on Brougham, 129.
- St. Martin's Hall, great paper duty indignation meeting at, 350.
- St. Paul's Cathedral, monument to Howard in, 12.
- Sarcasm, Wilberforce's power of, 82.
- Saturday Review*, the, on the repeal of the stamp duty, 322.
- Savory's, Mr., advertising circular, 311.
- Schimmel-Penninck, Mrs., on Watt in private life, 410.
- School-books, cheapness of, 208.
- Scotch prisons, state of, in 1775, 28.
- Scott, Sir Walter, on Watt in private life, 408; Robert Chambers's acquaintance with, 183.
- Screw-propeller, the, 438.

- Sedgwick, Professor, on the "Vestiges of Creation," 192.
- Self-improvement, Romilly's course of, 93.
- Semaphore telegraph, the, 443.
- Shakspeare, Knight's life of, 204.
- Sharp's, Granville, labors to abolish the slave-trade, 59.
- Shelburne's, Lord, denunciation of monopoly, 247.
- Shirley's, Thomas, experiments with coal-gas, 366.
- Siemens, Dr. C. W., on gas as a heating agent, 387.
- Slavery, abolition of, 84; petition of the Quakers against, 80.
- Slave-trade, Wilberforce's early abhorrence of the, 53; horrors of the, 62; abolition of, 74; Brougham's speech on the, 129.
- Smith's, Adam, "Wealth of Nations," 244.
- Smith, Mr., the missionary, murder of, 140.
- Smith's, Sydney, eulogium on Brougham, 146.
- Social Science Association, Brougham's connection with the, 168.
- Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, origin of the, 155; Brougham's labors on behalf of the, 157; character of the books published by the, 157.
- Society, London, in the eighteenth century, 55.
- Soho Foundry lighted by gas, 375.
- Sömmering's, S. T., electric telegraph, 450.
- Speculative Society, the, 124.
- Staël, Madame de, on Wilberforce, 77.
- Stamp duty, first imposition of the, 291.
- Stamp duty, the, and local newspapers, 310; and working-men's newspapers, 311; and class papers, 311; arguments in favor of the retention of, 314; report of Parliamentary committee on, 316; condemned by the House of Commons, 318; repeal of, 322; Sir G. C. Lewis on the anomalies of, 312.
- Stanhope, B., on the paper duty, 340.
- Stanley, Lord, of Alderley, Rowland Hill's dispute with, 240.
- "State and Prospects of Penny Postage," Rowland Hill's pamphlet on the, 232.
- "Statesmen of the Time of George III.," Brougham's work on the, 163.
- Steam navigation, growth of, 438.
- Steinhill's electric telegraph, 456.
- Stephenson, George, early years of, 412; marriage of, 413; first locomotive made by, 415; in the witness-box, 419; death of, 428; eulogiums on, 428.
- Stephenson, Robert, education of, 413; engineering achievements of, 427.
- Stephenson Memorial Hall at Chesterfield, 428.
- Stephenson centenary, celebration of the, 429.
- Stevens's, John, steam-vessel, 436.
- Stockton and Darlington Railway, opening of the, 416; celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the, 417.
- Style, Romilly's efforts to acquire a correct, 94.
- Submarine cable between England and France first laid, 464.
- Sunday labor at the Post-office, agitation against, 239.
- Sureties from newspapers, abolition of, 320.
- Swift, Dean, on the stamp duty, 291.
- Symington's, W., experiments in steam navigation, 433, 434.
- TALLEYRAND'S coldness to Romilly, 104.
- Telegraph posts, 461.
- Telegraph, uses of the, in preventing accidents, 473; in finding lost luggage, 474; in detecting crime, 474; to the press, 475; to commercial men, 476; as a weather prophet, 476.
- Telegraph wires, 462.
- Thomas, Moy, on the repeal of the paper duty, 345.
- Thompson's, Colonel Perronet, "Corn-law Catechism," 250.
- Thornton, Henry, on Wilberforce's "Practical Christianity," 71.
- Times*, the, on penny postage, 224; on Cobden, 271; on the Anti-Corn-law League, 277; on the advertisement duty, 296; on Mr. Gladstone's speech on the paper duty, 338; on the stamp duty, 322; on the third reading of the Paper Duty Repeal Bill, 349.
- Total abstinence, Cassell's early advocacy of, 205.
- "Traditions of Edinburgh," Robert Chambers's, 183.
- Trevethick's high-pressure steam-engine, 411.

UNDERGROUND telegraphs, 462.

VENICE, Howard's experience while in quarantine at, 41.

"Vestiges of Creation," the, 192.

Vice, Association for the Discouragement of, 58.

Vienna, the chief jail of, 38.

Villiers, C. P., and the repeal of the Corn-laws, 258, 259.

Volta's great discovery, 449.

Voltaic battery, invention of the, 450.

Voltaire, Howard on, 23.

WALLACE's, Mr., efforts on behalf of postal reform, 222.

Warrington, Howard's residence at, 81.

Watson, Dr. Richard, manufacture of coal-gas by, 371.

Watson, Sir William, electrical experiments of, 444.

Watt, James, anecdotes of, 397; love of story-telling of, 398; proceeds to London, 399; repairs a model of Newcomen's engine, 401; takes out a patent, 403; as a civil engineer, 403; occasional despondency of, 404; inventive genius of, 407; plagiarism of the inventions of, 407; monument to, 411.

Wellington, Duke of, Brougham's panegyric on, 160.

Wellington Ministry, Brougham's offer to take office in the, 153.

Westminster Bridge lighted by gas, 383.

Wheatstone, Professor, 457.

Wilberforce's marriage, 72.

Windsor in 1791, 196.

Winsor arrives in England, 373; publicly exhibits his lights, 374; obtains a patent, 375; puffs of gas-lighting by, 377; forms a company, 379.

Wolverhampton, Rowland Hill presented with testimonial at, 226.

Women, Romilly's high estimate of, 103.

Wood, Sir Charles, on the paper duty, 331.

Woolsack, Brougham's elevation to the, 145.

Worcester's, Marquis of, steam-engine, 393.

Wordsworth's "Excursion," Romilly on, 117.

Wrigley's, Mr., of Bury, opposition to the repeal of the paper duty, 344.

YORK CASTLE, state of criminal department at, 23.

Yorkshire, Brougham's election for, 144; Wilberforce's first election for, 56; second election for, 75.

Young's, Arthur, account of Lomond's telegraph, 447.


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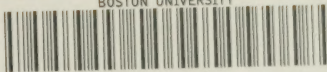






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